

BOUNDARIES AND TRADITIONS: DEFINING AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM
FROM 1965-1980

BY

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Abstract

Drawing from primary sources, including popular books and institutional archives, this dissertation explores how evangelical deliberations about social reform from 1965-1980 cast contesting definitions of evangelicalism. Each chapter identifies what evangelicals advocated, how they made those appeals, and the lines of fracture that split the movement. Ultimately, these historical fractures link to contemporary debates within evangelicalism that are still used to define and bound “evangelical” as an identity claim. This project is less about what led up to the Christian Right as a political power and more about a rhetorical issue of definition and the historical claims that articulated how evangelicals envisioned their role in America. Ideal models of evangelical identity manifested in three primary areas: individual reform, an ordered home, and a Christian nation. The first case study of this dissertation explores the tension between individual depravity and social inequality, out of which emerged an evangelical ideal that privileged personal piety over structural change. The second case study examines “the woman question,” or how evangelicals contested the home as a microcosm of divine order that either upheld hierarchical gender roles or functioned as a place to resist those roles. The final case study analyzes how evangelicals engaged and contested the myth of America as a Christian nation, examining the implications of that myth on race and poverty.

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CHAPTER 1

EVANGELICALISM IN CONFLICT

At the Religious Roundtable's National Affairs Briefing in August of 1980, presidential hopeful Ronald Reagan told a group of 15,000 evangelicals, "I endorse you."¹ In turn, Jerry Falwell, leader of the recently founded Moral Majority, placed his support behind the Republican frontrunner's candidacy. In the years since that moment in Dallas, the Christian Right "settled like a newly awakened angel of conscience on the nation's right shoulder, redefining the terms of public debate."² The social and political influence of evangelicals—often through the channel of the Christian right—is well documented, especially since the expansion of evangelicalism during the Cold War.³ From the mid-1960s into the 1980s, Americans increasingly left mainline liberal denominations and became members of evangelical churches.⁴ Robert Putnam notes that Protestants who identified as socially conservative evangelicals grew by about a third between 1960-1985.⁵ According to a 1976 Gallup poll, "nearly 50 million Americans" described themselves as "born again" and *Newsweek* declared 1976 as "the year of the evangelical."⁶

From Jonathan Edwards to Billy Graham, American evangelicals have participated in various social and political movements over the past two centuries, eliciting scholarly interest from multiple fields including religious studies, history, political science, and communication. In particular, scholars have attended to the ways in which evangelicalism intersects with American politics. The predominant line of inquiry into evangelicals as a politically influential group certainly contributes to a better understanding of evangelicalism in American public life. However, analyzing

evangelicals as a political force has led many scholars to treat evangelicals as a uniform block instead of giving sustained attention to the varieties of evangelicals and the growing pains within American evangelicalism as it became dominant cultural force in 20th century America.

In this dissertation, I explore how evangelicals and evangelical institutions defined themselves from 1965-1980. The freedom movements of the 1960s and 1970s served as external exigencies that forced evangelicals to re(imagine) their identity as people of faith. This period marks a time in which evangelicalism emerged as an increasingly powerful force in America even as evangelicals became disenchanted with American culture, struggling with questions of how to engage with the social and political movements that surrounded them. Many scholars have turned to the Christian Right as a framing device for exploring the relationship between evangelicals and America.⁷ Although such work has highlighted important figures and themes, this framework tends to privilege the political action of evangelicals and a distinct group of conservative leaders. My project functions instead as a rhetorical history of “evangelical” as an identity claim. I analyze, as Edward Schiappa describes, the “definitions put into practice as a special kind of social knowledge—a shared understanding among people about themselves, the objects of their world, and how they ought to use language.”⁸ In other words, I interrogate what evangelicals advocated they should be, how they made those appeals, and the lines of fracture that split the movement. I argue that ideal models of evangelical identity manifested in three primary areas: individual reform, an ordered home, and a Christian nation. In the first case study, I explore the debate between dual theories of social change, out of which emerged an evangelical ideal that privileged

personal piety over structural change. In the second case study, I examine how evangelicals contested the home as the locus of women's place. Finally, I analyze the ways in which evangelicals contributed to the myth of Christian America, examining the implications of that myth on race and poverty.

In order to ground my project in previous scholarship, I first provide a review of modern evangelicalism's theological and historical bearings, illustrating the ways in which evangelicals have been read largely as a political entity. Second, I explore the relationships among evangelicalism, race, and gender. Third, I turn to a discussion of religion and, more specifically, evangelicalism within rhetorical studies. Fourth, I describe my conceptual approach to this project. Finally, I offer a brief overview of my case studies.

Modern Evangelicalism

Religious scholars generally define evangelicalism in two primary ways: as an experiential religious practice rooted in certain beliefs⁹ or as a movement identifiable by institutions, coalitions, publications, and popular leaders. Within either of these frameworks, scholars tend to emphasize modern evangelicalism's focus on both the centrality of the individual and the Bible. Martin Marty defines evangelicalism as a Protestant belief system based on an individual's conversion through "an intense experience of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit" and reinforced by a view of the Bible as literal and authoritative.¹⁰ Evangelicalism reflects modernity in its emphasis on individual "choice" (making a "decision for Christ") as well as its "portable" and "experiential" style of carrying forth faith.¹¹ Like Marty, George Marsden distinguishes

evangelicalism via weight given to the “final authority of Scripture” and a “personal trust in Christ.” Yet, he adds that American evangelicals make up a social group: a “dynamic movement, with common heritages, common tendencies, an identity, and an organic character.”¹² For Marsden, the institutional presence and traditions of evangelicalism play an important role.

In a different vein, drawing from Marty’s claims about the affective nature of evangelicalism, rhetorical scholar Kristy Maddux argues that evangelicalism should be understood primarily as a discourse that “features a narrative, experiential framework oriented toward reaching more people.”¹³ She claims that doctrinal disagreements among “evangelicals” exist in so many areas of the faith that what unites evangelicalism is a rhetorical style that stresses a personal experience of God. Thus, evangelicalism is not a definable social group but a fluid discourse more likely to emerge in certain settings like “revivals and worship services” rather than theological debates.¹⁴ Although I agree with Maddux that evangelicalism can often be identified through situational discursive performances, e.g., an altar call, I argue that maintaining the socio-historical quality of the term matters. Many self-labeled evangelicals define the boundaries of evangelicalism through their doctrinal or political differences, using sometimes competing historical traditions to make these claims. Since guarding this term means something more to this specific group of Christians, I use the term “evangelicalism” as a theological,¹⁵ sociological, and discursive construct.

Evangelicals may not embody a Christian denomination in terms of organized structure, but they transcend denominations, often to the extent that evangelical identification as a social group can be more significant than denominational differences.

Educational institutions, publications, parachurch ministries, and popular leaders often speak for evangelicals as a whole—they have been the rhetorical gatekeepers of evangelicalism. These organizations and individuals construct recognizable rhetorical traditions that can be traced and analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of both the voices within the movement and the relationship between evangelicals and American culture. By defining evangelicals across their theological, sociological, and discursive characteristics, I contest the notion that evangelicals should be defined merely or mainly by one of these. To sketch evangelicalism's modern iterations in America, I next provide an overview of the relevant literature.

In the following brief history of evangelicalism, I draw mostly from scholars who have written on evangelicalism in the mid-twentieth century as a particular iteration of American evangelicalism with roots in Christian fundamentalism. Evangelicalism in the 1940s evolved through a growing segment of “progressive fundamentalists” or “neo-evangelicals” as church leaders focused on new opportunities availed to them with the prosperity of postwar life.¹⁶ They rejected fundamentalism as “too narrow” and modernism as “too obscure” and “unmotivating.”¹⁷ Evangelical institutions that arose in place of the Fundamentalist Federation and other separatist organizations were more optimistic and pragmatic than their fundamentalist forbearers. In 1943, the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) took on some of the non-ecumenical preferences of fundamentalists while it differentiated itself from fundamentalists as “a coalition with a positive purpose.”¹⁸ The NAE reflected a new group of evangelicals that organized with a desire to engage more with the world. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Youth for Christ (YFC) and other evangelistic campaigns surfaced with the main purpose

of evangelism and outreach, rather than entrenched separatism. These evangelical groups hoped to revive Christian America spiritually rather than through “political contention” like their fundamentalist forbearers.¹⁹ Thus, modern evangelicalism emerged out of a progressive-fundamentalist strain that prioritized evangelism and gained ground throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

Many historians agree that modern evangelicalism grew as a mostly conservative phenomenon in the midst of a broad religious resurgence in postwar America. Robert Wuthnow argues that religion in America experienced a major restructuring due to the sociological and political changes that occurred in the wake of World War II. In the 1950s, national leaders focused on a common American religious heritage, a “romantic past, a populist undifferentiated past.”²⁰ The social role of religion was viewed as “essential to American life” and evangelicalism complemented a growing sense of religious consensus.²¹ Billy Graham’s revivals, which focused on exclusive salvation through Christ, also popularized a “plural civic faith” in American democracy.²²

Evangelicalism lost some influence during the cultural upheavals of 1960s, but secularism and progressive politics from 1960-1967 gave way to disillusionment and conservative backlash. Leonard Sweet contends that evangelicals answered an American identity crisis and stepped into the vacuum of religious authority in the 1970s.²³ Grant Wacker, however, critiques the thesis that evangelicalism gained prominence in the late 1960s and 1970s because it provided an alternative to secular humanism. That contention does not account for the evangelical left or the expansion of the religious right. Instead, Wacker claims that two traditions in church-state relations influenced the place of evangelicals in modern society: first, the double value of evangelicals’ “custodial ideal”

to guard American culture and the “plural ideal” articulated by modernization; second, American southern traditions that emphasized a blurring of private faith with public space, which grew due partly to the influence of Billy Graham.²⁴ Ultimately, Wacker asserts that rapid social changes in American life “aroused” evangelicals to protect their place as the custodians of American culture and they took on an increasingly public role in the face of growing pluralism.²⁵ Similarly, Martin Marty contends that even though evangelicals viewed themselves as removed from politics, they adopted aggressive tactics to “reshape social life in America” that they saw as under threat.²⁶ Indeed, evangelicals may have been in conflict with the secularizing impulses of modernity but they saw themselves “at harmony with American life.”²⁷ Their covenantal view of American history—embracing the myth of the founding fathers as Christians who rooted the nation in scripture as a “model for present action”²⁸—led them to yearn for a return to an imagined, homogenized Christian nation. This sensibility guided evangelical politics from the 1950s through the 1970s, gaining even more traction with the rise of the Religious Right.

In the 1970s, many evangelicals increasingly aligned themselves with the Christian Right. Robert Wuthnow traces the beginnings of the Religious Right from the conservative/liberal split in the 1960s. Like the rest of America, evangelicals divided along liberal and conservative lines over the social unrest of the 1960s and changing levels of education. In the early 1970s, there were also a substantial number of moderates among evangelicals, many of whom supported Jimmy Carter. Most evangelicals, however, began marching to the right. The leaders of the Christian Right felt that “the nation was once better than it is now” and their ability to draw upon that narrative drove

their political success.²⁹ For example, the bicentennial celebration of the nation in 1976 and Jerry Falwell's "I love America" rallies helped the Christian Right reinvigorate the myth of America's "holy history" as a Christian nation.³⁰ Additionally, the rise of the Moral Majority increased media attention to the New Right whose ideological political participation focused on making religion more visible in public life, particularly in schools and on "family issues" like abortion. They increasingly sought to rally around political and social issues, which had bearing on "public morality."³¹ By 1978, the Christian Right had some congressional gains, drawing the attention of conservative politicians. With the help of Robert Billings, a religious advisor to Ronald Reagan's campaign, Reagan latched onto the rhetoric of the Christian Right and successfully earned the allegiance of conservative evangelicals. Most of those personalities, like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, hailed from the south where Baptists and Pentecostals were growing denominations more comfortable with a fundamentalist label.

This review of evangelicalism reveals some notable patterns. First, American evangelicals are driven by deep theological commitments to personal salvation and biblical authority. Second, evangelicals have dominantly been read through their fundamentalist origins dating to the 1920s and 1930s. Third, postwar evangelical political participation has historically been precipitated by a conviction to conserve the nation's Christian values. The movement's conservative political presence has led scholars to read evangelicalism as primarily a white, male-dominated movement. Indeed, the white, patriarchal leanings of American evangelicalism reflect a vested interest in maintaining certain ideologies of gender and race. Next, I review the literature on black evangelicals

and evangelical women as potential areas for expansion and contestation of existing evangelical narratives.

Evangelicalism, Race, and Gender

In the past 50 years, American evangelicalism has largely been understood as a patriarchal, pro-white religious movement, due in part to its southern roots. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s figures like Jerry Falwell and James Dobson toed the line of a particular brand of evangelicalism that embraced conservative Christian Right ideals of whiteness and male-headship. But, other iterations of evangelicalism are worthy of scholarly attention. In this section I first carve out a space for the significance of race within American religion and, more particularly, its role in the history of American evangelicalism. Then, I consider the tensions of framing African American evangelicals within the broader evangelical movement and understanding manifestations of evangelicalism within African American Protestantism. Finally, I turn to a discussion of gender ideologies that have dominated evangelical thought and practice, calling particular attention to potential areas of expansion in the literature on evangelical women.

There are important reasons why many apparently evangelical African Americans do not identify as evangelical per se, even though they may have similar theological underpinnings and patterns of religious practice. For the most part, these reasons can be traced to the marginalization of African Americans nationally and, more specifically, within the American evangelical movement. In a recent anthology on African American religious thought edited by Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr., David Wills describes the extended encounter between black and white Americans as “a story of a persisting

and seemingly intractable gap or distance.”³² He argues that racial tensions are crucial to our understanding of America’s unique religious past and two important tensions that have defined America’s religious landscape—pluralism/toleration and puritanism/collective purpose. Evangelicalism is central to this narrative. The 18th century context of evangelical Protestantism shaped the early religious practices of African Americans.³³ Antislavery activism among evangelicals and racially integrated camp meetings defined evangelicalism as a more egalitarian form of Christianity, particularly in the south. Wills claims, “It was only with the rise of evangelicalism that a biracial religious movement appeared in organized, public form.”³⁴ However, two factors altered this landscape in the early 19th century. First, white evangelicals started accepting slavery as a way of life. Second, white slave owners and church leaders began exercising ecclesiastical power over black preachers. The increasingly stratified power structures caused a schism between black and white worshippers. Throughout the Civil War and reconstruction, the challenges of southern racism and northern paternalism continued. Eddie Glaude claims, “the black jeremiad grew out of an ambivalent relation with white evangelical Christianity in which African Americans simultaneously rejected white America yet participated in one of the nation’s most sacred rhetorical traditions.”³⁵ This ambivalence reflected in the rhetoric of African Americans illustrates the complex trajectory of evangelicalism—its intricate connection to a mythic national past and America’s racialized history.

Throughout the 20th century, blacks increasingly left traditionally white evangelical churches or denominations and joined African American denominations that made up the “Black Church.”³⁶ Michael Battle argues, “In many ways, the Black Church

was forced into existence—perhaps, even into exile.”³⁷ It arose to facilitate community and provide a space for the working out of what it meant to be Christian, black, and American. Even as African Americans joined mainline denominations, they maintained southern religious traditions that reflected their evangelical roots.³⁸ Still, as an identifiable sociological group, evangelicals were not central to the civil rights movement of the mid-20th century; rather, ecumenical Protestantism and institutions such as the National Council of Churches were the primary religious channels of social change.

This brief history of the relationship between African Americans and evangelicalism illuminates the centrality and eventual displacement of most formal ties to evangelicalism within African American church communities. It also reveals the interconnectedness of race and religion. Wills draws attention to the “polarities of race” in contrast with “the varieties of our religion” in order to claim that these spectrums are actually quite different and that scholars need to pay more attention to the former, not just the latter.³⁹ Since racial polarities have predominantly been seen between black and white Americans, examining instantiations of African American evangelicalism could add to the catalogue of tensions that plague America’s religious past.

For Wills, Best, and Jonathan Walton, grouping black and white evangelicals together can be historically problematic.⁴⁰ African Americans who are theologically very similar to white evangelicals constructed their religion in a nation that was segregated for much of its history. Although several of these scholars point to moments of integration that help us trace the roots of overlap between black and white evangelicals, the dominant picture is one characterized by separation. Thus, African American religious expressions do not cohere apart from the broader framework of black religion. Sociologically,

Michael Emerson and Christian Smith also illustrate the difficulty of reconciling the differences between black and white evangelicals' views on race based on the cultural tools they use. Emerson and Smith conclude that white evangelicals' cultural toolkit and their relative isolation from a plurality of races leads them to "contribute to the reproduction of racial inequality."⁴¹ The influence of the pro-white Christian Right in particular has had a prevailing effect on white evangelicals. Thus, placing evangelical African Americans alongside some of their white counterparts would seem aberrant from the real suspicions that they have of one another.

African Americans remain largely absent from most histories of American evangelicals, barring a nod or two about how white evangelicals responded, usually poorly, to the Civil Rights Movement. *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, which includes one chapter on race, does not explore the existence of black theology within evangelicalism. Tim Tseng argues simply, "few evangelical theologians have engaged ethnicity and race. Many are concerned that the employment of 'racial oppression' and 'liberation' categories reduces theological reflection to the politics of identity."⁴² Overarchingly, scholarly choices about who counts as "evangelical" have reified American evangelicalism as a white religion.

Still, there may be good reasons for resisting the separation of black and white evangelicals entirely. Emerson and Smith's brief history of African American evangelists of the Civil Rights era can be used as a starting point toward tracing real moments of cooperation or at least the desire for diversification through the work of racial reconciliation.⁴³ Historically, there seem to be instances where it is helpful to think of evangelicals as a more diverse group. There are institutional overlaps, i.e., the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA);

African Americans trained in white evangelical institutions founded the latter and sought alternative institutional means of promoting what they felt was the full gospel message. This project explores archival material of the NBEA and a retrospective of its founding, which have been unattended to by most scholars.⁴⁴ Additionally, several prominent African American pastors and ministry leaders continue to explicitly define themselves as evangelicals such as John Perkins and Tony Evans.⁴⁵ In one way or another, racial tensions prevent a neatly unified understanding of American evangelicalism, but they point to patterns worth exploring: “However much members of both races might sometimes wish it were otherwise, the painful encounter of black and white is likely to remain in the future what it has been in the past—one of the crucial, central themes in the religious history of the United States.”⁴⁶

Like race, gender has also played a significant role within evangelicalism, particularly in evangelical rhetoric since the late-nineteenth century. Evangelical discourses on gender reveal deep ambiguities regarding the role of women. R. Marie Griffith contends: “far from being a fixed entity churning out traditional teachings on gender roles, evangelical ideology has always been varied” so that even “apparently conservative” groups offer “a broad repertoire of choices and mutable scripts.”⁴⁷ Judith Stacy and Susan E. Gerard concur: “the gender ideology and politics of born-again Christians in the United States today are far more diverse, complex and contradictory than widely held stereotypes allow.”⁴⁸ Although scholarship on Pentecostal and other charismatic evangelical groups supports this claim,⁴⁹ many historians agree that modern evangelicals have been largely reactive, sustaining conservative understandings of gender roles.

Margaret Bendroth and Betty DeBerg both describe the solidification of stratified gender roles in the early 20th century as evangelicals reacted to “shifting sexual mores” and “an increasingly public role for women” by reifying Victorian ideals of femininity.”⁵⁰ As Sara Evans writes, “between 1900 and World War I the old Victorian code which prescribed strict segregation of the sexes in separate spheres crumbled.”⁵¹ The “New Woman” of the era was more outwardly sexual and independent.⁵² These changing ideals of womanhood unearthed a growing concern among fundamentalists who focused their critiques “on the social behavior of women” such as immodest dress and public appearances.⁵³ By analyzing popular evangelical literature and sermons, DeBerg ultimately argues that late Victorian gender roles became more entrenched as a reaction to industrialization, urbanization, and First Wave feminism. If masculinity could not be linked to their labor, men became defined by what they were not: women.⁵⁴ The rigid boundaries for separate spheres in the late 19th century thus characterized fundamentalist homes through the 1920s.

Many of the social norms of modern evangelicalism, including the ideologies driving sexual behavior and gender identity, can be traced to its fundamentalist roots. Indeed, DeBerg insists that evangelicals’ supposed increase in gender consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s, the position articulated by George Marsden, is much more a reflection of their fundamentalist inheritance, an intrinsic desire to separate themselves from the broader culture.⁵⁵ But, Bendroth complicates the picture. She argues that in the 1950s, “evangelicals reacted in two fundamentally conflicting ways. Some reasserted the traditional notions of male and female roles with even greater insistence, while others began to question the very existence of seemingly arbitrary sexual roles.”⁵⁶ Although

evangelicals grew in number and influence, in the 1960s many evangelicals felt increasingly anxious, “particularly in regard to the family” as rapid social changes unfolded around them. Of course, the question of “woman’s place” was central to that.⁵⁷ However, changes in marital practices, that is, as marriages became about personal fulfillment rather than social utility, evangelicals changed their arguments about gender from social value to metaphysics, “invoking a divine ‘order of creation’ as the rationale for male dominance and female submission in the church and family.”⁵⁸ Despite broad support for this turn to more conservative gendered ideals, many evangelicals resisted the emphasis on female submission, particularly in marriage. Stacy and Gerard argue that challenges to the doctrine of female submission became the primary way in which more progressive evangelicals adopted feminist ideologies, re-envisioning them through the biblical language of “mutual submission” rather than outright rejecting either submission or feminism.⁵⁹ Within studies on evangelicalism or feminism, a less-studied phenomenon is Christian feminism, which this dissertation addresses. Before I move on to provide an overview of case studies, however, I first review the literature on rhetoric and religion.

Evangelicalism and Rhetorical Studies

This dissertation examines an important area in rhetorical scholarship—the intersection of rhetoric and religion. By studying the rhetoric of religious people, we can expand the catalogue of American public address and deepen our knowledge of other texts. Religion, James Darsey and Joshua Ritter argue, “lies close to the core of America’s genetic code; religious discourse is elemental to our national talk.”⁶⁰ Yet, “despite a long history of crossovers of scholars from schools of divinity to departments of

communication, religious rhetoric has rarely been at the center of studies in American public address.”⁶¹ Thankfully, in the past ten years rhetorical scholars and publications in the field have sought to remedy gaps in the study of religious rhetoric by exploring topics on popular Christian media, civil rights rhetoric, and religious leaders.⁶² In this section, I outline the ways in which rhetorical scholars have attended to religion, particularly evangelicalism. In doing so, I demonstrate the ways in which my work builds upon and diverges from the literature. Ultimately this project builds on two promising moves in recent literature: first, I press against the tendency among many rhetorical scholars to apply a singular political lens to religion;⁶³ second, I consider the discursive aspects of religion as a fluid rather than fixed construct. In doing so, I focus on an overlooked area in rhetorical studies: the rhetorical negotiation of a religious tradition within the broader framework of the nation.

Much of the work on evangelicalism within rhetorical studies examines the rhetoric of politicians and the political participation of Christian conservatives. Studies of evangelicalism arose most prominently in response to the rise of the Christian Right in the 1980s and in the wake of George W. Bush’s presidency. In the culture wars of the 1980s, rhetoric journals published a plethora of scholarship on the Religious Right. Several scholars sought to explain its rise by trying to reconcile a Christian fundamentalist theology seemingly at odds with political activism. If fundamentalism was a reactionary movement invested in premillennialism, which deemphasized human agency in the face of a divinely ordained end-time, why would its adherents be so politically active? Religious historian George Marsden argued that the paradox of politicized Christian fundamentalism might be resolved by coupling Richard Hofstadter’s

work on paranoid style with premillennial theology.⁶⁴ However, rhetoricians Tom Daniels, Richard Jensen, and Allen Lichtenstein claimed that Marsden's "political paranoia" thesis was insufficient.⁶⁵ While Hofstadter's schema was rooted in conspiracy, in premillennialism, "the mechanism of history is the will of God."⁶⁶ Thus, they argued that fundamentalists became politically active in order to combat the forces of humanism encroaching on the public sphere and to achieve their primary goal: to evangelize. Stephen O'Leary and Michael McFarland also probed the apparent discrepancies between premillennial theology and political activism by analyzing efforts of fundamentalist "media ministers" like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.⁶⁷ O'Leary and McFarland argued that during Robertson's presidential campaign, he shifted his rhetorical appeals from premillennial threats of an immanent apocalypse to national revival, which needed human participation.⁶⁸

As rhetorical scholars in the 1980s began explicating the histories of fundamentalists in order to make sense of their increased presence in American politics, they identified certain "mentalities" to explain the staunchness with which a broader segment of evangelicals approached social issues. In the early 20th century, in response to Darwin and other modern social forces, evangelicalism shifted from a "harmonized mentality" to a "fortress mentality" that gave rise to Christian fundamentalism. In the fortress mentality, "the mission of spreading the evangel had to accommodate the necessity of buttressing religious education, protecting the truth of the scriptures, and holding off the forces of evil until the Lord returned."⁶⁹ In a less militant sense, Charles Conrad noted a "spiritual guardianship" mentality that drove later Christian Right organizations like the Moral Majority, who felt they were morally responsible for the

nation.⁷⁰ However, for Conrad, guardianship had distinct political ends; the Moral Majority was “an organization committed to the revival of an idyllic America, a society devoted to traditional moral values and structured in ways which allow citizens who share those values to exercise a very specific version of political influence.”⁷¹ Christians were more easily inspired to political action if they thought they could play an important part in making the nation.

For scholars exploring the social cohesion provided by religion, myth played a prominent role, particularly in American exceptionalism. Conrad argued that “a matrix of spiritual and secular myths” expressed through romantic form constituted the Moral Majority’s “societal vision.”⁷² Employing myth as a rhetorical strategy helped fundamentalists romanticize the past in order to remake the present without violating their theological bearings. Themes from Sacvan Bercovitch, i.e., America’s mythic past and redemptive history, reverberated across Christian Right rhetoric. These themes have also been explored more recently among rhetorical scholars analyzing more liberal discourses and the paradoxes of the jeremiad.⁷³ For example, John Murphy framed Robert Kennedy’s speech after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination as a jeremiad meant to restore “social harmony.”⁷⁴ Murphy argued that the “jeremiad brings with it a definition of American history as a constant movement toward a special destiny, sanctioned by God, to establish that ‘shining city on a hill’.”⁷⁵ However, Murphy acknowledged the jeremiad’s inherent tension with progressivism—if the jeremiad encourages a return to certain ideals of the past, it ignores more subversive discourses and functions as a rhetoric of “social control.”⁷⁶ Thus, rhetorical scholars studying the

political discourse of the left and right have illustrated the influence of covenantal rhetoric in national politics.

Although interest in evangelicalism waned somewhat in the 1990s, George W. Bush's presidency elicited new questions about evangelicalism and American political culture. A fresh group of scholars recognized evangelicals' ideological or theological roots, but they became more interested in their social and political influence on public life. For the past ten years, Martin Medhurst has articulated the dominant narrative of evangelicals in the field of rhetorical studies. He argues that evangelicals were re-energized by *Roe v. Wade* and that they "emerged on the national scene with little to no experience in national politics. Their last national hero was William Jennings Bryan in the 1920s."⁷⁷ Although this might be a bit of an overstatement,⁷⁸ like many religious historians, Medhurst argues, "cultural factors, more than political parties or platforms...first brought evangelicals in large numbers into the political process."⁷⁹ Even so, Medhurst identifies evangelicals predominantly as a political entity, analyzing their participation in shaping the Republican Party as we know it today. His narrative of evangelicals orients around popular figures on the Christian Right like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Paul Weyrich, and Tim LaHaye. However, Medhurst helpfully points out that many moderate evangelicals have risen in American politics—people such as Samuel Rodriguez and Joel C. Hunter. He states, "Their goals are not to forward a particular party agenda, but to advance what they consider to be a biblical agenda, as they try to discern what the Christian Gospel has to say about poverty, or race relations, or stewardship of the environment, or peacemaking, or health care, or education."⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Klaus J. Milich argues that power for evangelicals lies in a dividing line that

“does not run along race, class, gender, or nation but between those who adhere to the process of secularization in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and those who cling to born-again experiences, the literacy of the Bible, and divine order.”⁸¹ He contends that the prominence of evangelicalism in the U.S., which he links to the success of George W. Bush, has squelched the secularization thesis (something religious studies scholars have been noting for the last twenty years) and that it is time now for rhetorical studies and cultural studies to pay attention to evangelicals.

Despite the dominant political thread in studies of evangelicalism, rhetorical scholars also frame evangelicalism as a discourse. Kristy Maddux argues that “we should recognize fundamentalism, modernism, and evangelicalism as discourses rather than discrete groups of people, institutions, or doctrines.”⁸² This claim allows her to see some of the narrow discursive similarities between modernism and fundamentalism, and the way in which evangelicalism “conversely, features a narrative, experiential framework oriented toward reaching more people.”⁸³ By complicating evangelical figures who have been read as fundamentalists because of their theological orientations, Maddux lays some important groundwork for the ways in which rhetorical scholars can contribute to studies of evangelicals.⁸⁴ Primarily, she presses against assumptions about the political investments of evangelicals and asks how language marks them as culturally distinctive. Likewise, Mark Allan Steiner reads evangelicalism as a discursive construct. He claims that evangelical rhetoric reveals an “inordinate concern for boundary-drawing and boundary-policing.”⁸⁵ Steiner’s observations about this rhetorical pattern among evangelicals drive many of the questions in this dissertation.

The scholarship explored here is by no means exhaustive; there is much work to be done on the rhetoric of evangelicals. For too long, evangelicals have been understood primarily as a voting bloc to further the agenda of the New Right. I am less concerned with the explicit political action of evangelicals and more attendant to the ways evangelicals make sense of their role as people of faith—that includes the political arena, but is more chiefly localized in the way they talk to each other and about themselves. Darsey and Ritter argue, “few studies have been done on how argumentative territories are divided among members of the same ideological or theological family, various parties claiming the same principles and warrants.”⁸⁶ In analyzing the same “ideological or theological family,” which, in the case of evangelicals, would be defined broadly as sharing the same belief in the authority of the Bible and salvation through Christ, I am studying a fairly uncharted area of rhetoric and religion.

Conceptual Approach

I approach this study as a rhetorical history of evangelicals that traces formal and informal definitions of evangelicalism. Good rhetorical histories contribute to the larger goal of articulating how people made sense of the problems of their age and how “their processes of identification and confrontation succeeded or failed.”⁸⁷ In that vein, I frame the archival texts in this dissertation as evangelical vocabularies that show “how messages are” or were “created and used by people to influence and relate to one another.”⁸⁸ My attention to definition complements this rhetorical history of evangelicalism because definitional analysis “investigates how people persuade other people to adopt and use certain definitions to the exclusion of others.”⁸⁹ In order to

provide a conceptual thread through this project, I describe ideal modes of evangelical identity that constructed boundaries around who or what counted as “evangelical.” In each case study, I consider how these identities reflected evangelical “rhetorical traditions” or codes that “consist of common patterns of language use, manifest in performance, and generative of a shared means for making sense of the world.”⁹⁰

A rhetorical tradition vivifies the values and logics of a community by illustrating how they are enacted rhetorically. James Jasinski uses the related term “performative tradition” to describe how a tradition can “achieve concrete existence in particular discursive performances.”⁹¹ For example, Jasinski shows how rhetors draw from the “historical resources” of their particular community to create new arguments that resonate with communal values.⁹² Traditions function ritualistically to stabilize a community’s identity, but they may also work constitutively as an inventional resource available to reimagine communal action or identity. According to John Murphy, rhetorical traditions draw from or “organize” the social knowledge of a community.⁹³ The consensus of an audience or public generates social knowledge, but the continued potential for new knowledge is based on future deliberative contexts; social knowledge is in flux.⁹⁴ Thus, rhetorical traditions establish norms of speech that reflect cultural logics, but the dynamic quality of social knowledge is instantiated in flexible codes. This feature of rhetorical traditions—its potential to reify or stretch habitual norms—can illuminate the rhetorical actions of evangelicals as they sought to define themselves. I contend that evangelicalism consists of traditions that are constantly being refashioned discursively.

The constraints and inventive freedoms allotted through rhetorical traditions provide a helpful approach for tracking the ways in which evangelical identity stabilized

and tore apart in the 1960s and 1970s. When the definitional thread of what it meant to be an evangelical was so pervasively contested, tracing performances of ideal evangelical identity through rhetorical traditions will uncover the fractures within evangelicalism. In particular, it will show how evangelicals appropriated their values in the midst of exigencies internal and external to the movement. Analyzing evangelicalism through the lens of rhetorical tradition can tease out points of connection and fracture within a diverse evangelical movement, and it can ask conceptually if a tradition can only be stretched so far. Throughout my analysis, I draw from both individuals and institutions engaged in the kind of definitional activity at the center of this project. Before I describe each case study, I briefly outline the significant role of institutions in drawing boundaries within evangelicalism.

Analyzing institutional rhetoric will help fulfill my goal to write a rhetorical history of evangelicals that accounts for dominant performances of evangelicalism based on certain kinds of social knowledge and how those performances were supported or interrupted. Organizational communication scholars John C. Lammers and Joshua B. Barbour define institutions as “constellations of established practices guided by enduring, formalized, rational beliefs that transcend particular organizations and situations.”⁹⁵ Institutions are particularly suited to serve an important role in religion. Bruce Lincoln describes institutions as one of the four domains of religion “that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value.”⁹⁶ Institutions serve as a kind of compass among people who share a religion. Although institutions vary in size and power, “in whatever form they take, they house the leaders who assume

responsibility for preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of the group's defining discourse."⁹⁷ In my analysis, I look for ways in which institutions and their leaders negotiate the tensions between change and continuity among evangelicals. I pay particular attention to how these institutions define evangelicalism, how they respond to social change, and how they articulate their purposes.

I analyze the rhetoric of three evangelical institutions: the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus (EEWC), and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA). Each of these organizations sought to deal with the pressing issues of race, gender, and other social issues that implicated some kind of theological response from leading organizations in the evangelical community. Since 1942, the NAE was well-established as a voice of mainstream American evangelicalism, but it wasn't until the early 1970s when the EEWC and the NBEA emerged as alternative institutional voices for evangelicals. Once founded, these organizations challenged the agenda-setting power of the NAE, contributing new social knowledge to evangelicalism that disrupted notions of normative evangelical performance or tradition. Thus, the rhetoric of these evangelical institutions serves as an important discursive site where official declarations about evangelical identity were articulated and contested.

In order to explore the institutional rhetoric of evangelicals, my research incorporates archival material from the NAE Records at Wheaton College, the Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) Archive at Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center, the Nancy Hardesty Papers at Union Theological Seminary, and the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus Archive at Union Theological Seminary.⁹⁸ The NAE

and ESA collections contain official declarations of faith in addition to letters between members that record internal decision-making processes. These records reveal the sorts of tensions that characterized evangelicalism during the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, they show how these organizations debated their respective missions and methods, implicating different forms of evangelicalism. The Union Theological Seminary's Burke Library archives provide material addressed in my case study on the home and Christian feminism. The Nancy Hardesty Papers contain articles, sermon notes, and reviews of *All We're Meant to Be*, one of the primary texts in chapter three. Hardesty was a central figure in founding the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC and later EEWC), a Christian feminist organization focused on gender-equality through consciousness-raising. The EWC began as a loose conglomerate of local chapters and achieved a national presence just before it underwent a series of internal conflicts surrounding sexuality and race. The EWC archive contains the minutes of chapter meetings, organizational mission statements and strategy documents, as well as membership polls that recount many of the debates that split the organization. All of these archives provide texts essential to excavating how evangelical organizations with a range of ideological and political investments talked about issues central to evangelical identity. Of particular relevance to this project, the archives referenced in this dissertation are housed within institutions that also play a gate-keeping role, particularly Wheaton College, which maintains archival content that characterizes a mostly conservative evangelical movement (excluding, in some ways, Evangelicals for Social Action). Thus, it is important to note that the Nancy Hardesty Papers and the EWC archives are literal outsiders to the dominant narrative of evangelicalism expressed through Wheaton's archive.

Case Studies

In the following case studies, I examine three spheres of debate: the individual, the home, and the nation. These areas were the sites upon which evangelicals built ideal forms of evangelical identity. I intentionally chose “messy” cases that epitomize, violate, and surprise common expectations of evangelicals—who they were, their values, and how they were supposed to talk. In each case, I analyze an ideal form of evangelical identity as a way to identify what kinds of codes or behaviors reflected the rhetorical traditions of evangelicals. I then pay particular attention to how those traditions were upheld, reconfigured, or subverted.

In the second chapter, I examine how evangelicals negotiated the tension between the individual and social concern. While most evangelical leaders and institutions like Billy Graham and the NAE advocated evangelizing the individual as the central goal of evangelism, more progressive evangelicals resisted this singular locus of attention. Contesting voices within the NAE and the new group, Evangelicals for Social Action, argued that evangelicals should be agents of change on issues like demilitarization and poverty alleviation. I analyze Graham’s sermons and a series of evangelical declarations drafted by committees and institutions, which drew boundaries around legitimate expressions of evangelicalism. Ultimately, these positions originated in competing theories of social change. In the first, only individual reform could effect change because individuals made up the social structures. In the second, changing social structures was necessary because sinful individuals would otherwise take advantage of corrupt structures.

In the third chapter, I explore debates over the home as the locus of women's place. Evangelicals wrote a plethora of material on normative constructions of gender in the home as an essential part of Christian living. Women were the main participants in this debate, writing about their marriages, their children, and their faith. While many evangelical women urged other women to pursue a godly call to wifely submission and motherhood, evangelical feminists resisted being pigeonholed in these roles. In order to explore resistant narratives, I examine biblical feminism primarily through the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus (EEWC), which endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment, supported inclusive language in Bible translation and Christian publications, and affirmed the ordination of women.⁹⁹ During the 1970s, the evangelical feminist movement became visible through a variety of outlets, including the book, *All We're Meant to Be*, which Margaret Bendroth calls a "groundbreaking exposition of evangelical feminism," earning Eternity Magazine's Book of the Year in 1975.¹⁰⁰ Both Christian feminists and their conservative counterparts made arguments claiming the "biblical" view of womanhood. But, since most evangelical interpretations of the bible were prone to explicit truth claims, both positions on gender could not co-exist.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I examine how evangelicals perceived America as a Christian nation. I analyze the rhetoric of Billy Graham and the NAE, who defined evangelicalism as inextricably woven together with American exceptionalism. They felt called to steward God's chosen nation through the promotion of a mythic Christian past and through political policies that would protect the nation's Christian heritage. However, as white evangelicals embraced faith and patriotism as complementary aims, African Americans questioned how they fit within a movement that

celebrated a national past rife with racial violence. Leading African American evangelists, such as Tom Skinner and William Pannell (both of whom were or are involved with the NBEA) contested the dominant strains of evangelical “stewardship.” They appropriated black consciousness and liberation theology in order to reach black communities and unify their minority presence within a largely white religious movement.

These case studies show that evangelicalism should be understood as a movement that constantly redefined itself. As a rhetorical history, this project makes sense of the contestations and fissures that occurred among evangelicals as they refashioned evangelicalism to respond to social change. Evangelicals enacted their rhetorical traditions in new and competing ways to meet the constraints of their time. Jaroslav Pelikan argues that traditions are fundamental to our experience and knowledge. He states, “Once understood, the tradition, unlike our biological DNA, does confront us with a further choice: the choice between recovery and rejection, with a range of possibilities that combine partial recovery with partial rejection.”¹⁰¹ Although Pelikan references “tradition” more generally, this principle can also be applied to rhetorical traditions, which are always in flux. By examining how evangelicals employed their rhetorical traditions, I explore why those traditions, in their most dominant manifestations, may not necessarily have resonated with all evangelicals. Several reasons, including complex histories of race relations, patriarchy, contesting points of origin for some ideal past, and external exigencies, help explain these debates. Without a single denominational voice to represent them, evangelicals fought to define themselves within a nation clamoring for change.

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- ¹ Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Roseville, CA: Prima Publishing, 2001), 680.
- ² Kathy Sawyer, "Christian Right Takes Its Place at Center Stage," *The Washington Post*, December 25, 1984, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/12/25/christian-right-takes-its-place-at-center-stage/2f0a4f6d-44e8-40cb-b213-836862725ecb/>
- ³ See William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Alex R. Schafer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).
- ⁴ James Davidson Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 6. From 1965-1970 evangelical denominations grew in membership by 8% as liberal denominations declined by 4.6% at the same 5-year rate.
- ⁵ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2000), 76.
- ⁶ Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 160.
- ⁷ See William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), Grant Wacker, "Uneasy in Zion: Evangelicals in Postmodern Society," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984).
- ⁸ Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 3.
- ⁹ British historian David Bebbington defines evangelicalism mainly through personal experience and a set of convictions. He argues that evangelicalism should be understood as a quadrilateral: biblicism, the Bible is the source for truth; crucicentrism, a focus on Christ's death on the cross; conversionism; and activism, the belief that Christians should participate in evangelism and missions. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), 2-17.
- ¹⁰ Martin Marty, "The Revival of Evangelicalism and Southern Religion," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, ed. David E. Harrell, Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), 10.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- ¹² George Marsden, ed. *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), x.
- ¹³ Kristy Maddux, "The Foursquare Gospel of Aimee Semple McPherson," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2011): 295.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.
- ¹⁵ Theologically, I agree that evangelicals adhere to Bebbington's quadrilateral.
- ¹⁶ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 193.
- ¹⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 37.
- ¹⁸ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 152.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.
- ²⁰ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 31.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 59
- ²² *Ibid.*, 330

²³ Leonard Sweet, "The 1960s: The Crisis of Liberal Christianity and the Public Emergence of Evangelicalism," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984).

²⁴ Grant Wacker, "Uneasy in Zion: Evangelicals in Postmodern Society," 23.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Martin Marty, "Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 59.

²⁷ George Marsden, "Evangelicals, History, and Modernity," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 95.

²⁸ Ibid., 97.

²⁹ Mark Noll, *One Nation Under God? Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988).

³⁰ Richard Pierard, "The New Religious Right in American Politics," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 173; William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, 203.

³¹ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 200.

³² David W. Wills, "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White," in *African American Religious Thought*, ed. Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 215-216.

³³ For a history of the displacement of African traditions and Christianization of religious practices of slaves see E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church In America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 14-17.

³⁴ David W. Wills "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White," 216.

³⁵ Eddie Glaude, "Religion and Violence in Black and White," in *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America*, ed. John D. Carlson and Jonathan H. Ebel. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 140.

³⁶ According to Michael Battle, the denominations which make up the Black Church include: African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, National Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Baptist Convention, and Church of God in Christ. See Michael Battle, *The Black Church in America: African American Christian Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xii. However, Curtis Evans' seminal work has problematized scholarly use of the "black church." He argues, "'Black religion,' whether conceptualized variously by whites and blacks as an amorphous spirituality, primitive religion, emotionalism, or actual black churches under the rubric of 'The Negro Church,' groaned under the burden of a multiplicity of interpreters' demands ranging from uplift of the race to bringing an ambiguous quality of 'spiritual softness' to a materialistic and racist white culture." See Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

³⁷ Michael Battle, *The Black Church in America: African American Christian Spirituality*, xi.

³⁸ Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago 1915-1952* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³⁹ David W. Wills "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White," 220.

⁴⁰ Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2009).

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- ⁴¹ Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113.
- ⁴² Tim Tseng, "Race," in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 475.
- ⁴³ Several black evangelists including Tom Skinner and John Perkins were involved in ministries of racial reconciliation. Even more traditionally white organizations, such as Intervarsity, established similar ministries. See Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 54.
- ⁴⁴ William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Chicago: The Author, 1979).
- ⁴⁵ Evans, a popular African American religious broadcaster out of Dallas Theological Seminary, includes a history of black evangelists in the 1960s and 1970s in his book. Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: A Fresh Look at Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and Justice* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011).
- ⁴⁶ David W. Wills "The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White," 220.
- ⁴⁷ R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 179.
- ⁴⁸ Judith Stacy and Susan E. Gerard, "'We are not Doormats': The Influence of Feminism on Contemporary Evangelicals in the United States" in *Uncertain Terms: Negotiating Gender in American Culture*, eds. Faye Ginsburg and Anna L. Tsing (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), 99.
- ⁴⁹ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
- ⁵⁰ Margaret L. Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role' in American Evangelicalism, 1930-1980," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 122.
- ⁵¹ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York, NY: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 160.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 182.
- ⁵³ Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 106.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁵⁵ See George Marsden, "From Fundamentalism to Evangelicalism: A Historical Analysis" in *The Evangelicals*, eds. David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 122.
- ⁵⁶ Margaret L. Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role' in American Evangelicalism, 1930-1980," 122-23.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Judith Stacy and Susan E. Gerard, "'We are not doormats': The influence of Feminism on contemporary Evangelicals in the United States," 101.
- ⁶⁰ James Darsey and Joshua Ritter, "Religious Voices in American Public Discourse," in *The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, eds. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 553.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 554.
- ⁶² See Kristy Maddux, *The Faithful Citizen, Popular Christian Media and Gendered Civic Identities* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); Gary S. Selby, *Martin Luther King and the Rhetoric of Freedom: The Exodus Narrative in America's Struggle for Civil Rights* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008); Jerome Dean Mahaffey, *Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

⁶³ When I refer to “politics” I mean national politics or electoral politics rather than the broad sense that everyday choices we make about where we live, buy our food, etc. are political on some level. I acknowledge that this distinction is not always neat.

⁶⁴ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 211.

⁶⁵ Tom D. Daniels, Richard J. Jensen, and Allen Lichtenstein, “Resolving the Paradox in Politicized Christian Fundamentalism,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 49, no. 4 (1985): 249.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶⁷ Stephen O’Leary and Michael McFarland “The Political use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic Interpretation in Pat Robertson’s Presidential Campaign,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989): 433-452.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁶⁹ Tom D. Daniels, Richard J. Jensen, and Allen Lichtenstein, “Resolving the Paradox in Politicized Christian Fundamentalism,” 250.

⁷⁰ Charles Conrad, “The Rhetoric of the Moral majority: An analysis of Romantic Form,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 2 (1983): 167.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁷³ See James Jasinski, “Rearticulating History in Epideictic Discourse: Frederick Douglass’s ‘The Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro,’” in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997): 71-89; James Jasinski and John M. Murphy, “‘Time, Space, and Generic Reconstruction: Martin Luther King’s ‘A Time to Break Silence’ as Radical Jeremiad,” in *Public Address and Moral Judgment*, ed. Shawn Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 97-126; A. Susan Owen, “Memory, War and American Identity: Saving Private Ryan as Cinematic Jeremiad,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 3 (2002): 249-82; Patricia Roberts-Miller, *Voices in the Wilderness: Public Discourse and the Paradox of Puritan Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ John M. Murphy, “‘A Time of Shame and Sorrow’: Robert F. Kennedy and the American Jeremiad,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76, no. 4 (1990): 402.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Martin Medhurst, “Evangelical Christian Faith and Political Action: Mike Huckabee and the 2008 Republican Presidential Nomination,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 32, no. 2 (2009): 200.

⁷⁸ Gerald L. K. Smith and Carl McIntire are two notable figures who combined politics and fundamentalist Christianity through the 1940s. See the introduction to William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996).

⁷⁹ Martin Medhurst, “Evangelical Christian Faith and Political Action: Mike Huckabee and the 2008 Republican Presidential Nomination,” 199.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 205

⁸¹ Klaus J. Milich, “Fundamentalism Hot and Cold: George W. Bush and the ‘Return of the Sacred,’” *Cultural Critique* 62 (2006): 116.

⁸² Kristy Maddux, “The Foursquare Gospel of Aimee Semple McPherson,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2011): 295.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Maddux has also explored the gendered nature of citizenship in popular (often evangelical) Christian media. See Kristy Maddux, *The Faithful Citizen, Popular Christian Media and Gendered Civic Identities* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

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- ⁸⁵ Mark Allan Steiner, "Reconceptualizing Christian Public Engagement: 'Faithful Witness' and the American Evangelical Tradition," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 32, no. 2 (2009): 311.
- ⁸⁶ James Darsey and Joshua Ritter "Religious Voices in American Public Discourse," 56.
- ⁸⁷ David Zarefsky, "Four Senses of Rhetorical History," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 32.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁸⁹ Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 4.
- ⁹⁰ John Murphy, "Inventing Authority: Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Orchestration of Rhetorical Traditions," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 72.
- ⁹¹ James Jasinski, "The Forms and Limits of Prudence in Henry Clay's (1850) Defense of the Compromise Measures," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 4 (1995): 455.
- ⁹² James Jasinski, "Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet's (1843) 'Address to the Slaves'," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 1, (2007): 30.
- ⁹³ Murphy, "Inventing Authority: Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Orchestration of Rhetorical Traditions," 72.
- ⁹⁴ Thomas B. Farrell, "Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976): 9.
- ⁹⁵ John C. Lammers and Joshua B. Barbour, "An Institutional Theory of Organizational Communication," *Communication Theory* 16, no. 3 (2006): 357.
- ⁹⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ The NBEA documents used in this dissertation were limited to what I found in the NAE records so I supplemented those with a self-published retrospective written by a founding member of the NBEA.
- ⁹⁹ "About EEWC-Christian Feminism Today," Christian Feminism Today, accessed July 2, 2013, <http://www.eewc.com/about/>
- ¹⁰⁰ Margaret L. Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role' in American Evangelicalism, 1930-1980," 133.
- ¹⁰¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 53.

CHAPTER 2

EVANGELIZING THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE “SOCIAL CONCERN” DEBATE

From its early iterations, American evangelicalism embraced primarily a gospel message that saved souls, not societies. The rise of evangelicalism in eighteenth century America was, Mark Noll argues, essentially a “pietistic movement in which the relationship of the self to God eclipsed all other concerns.”¹ Despite evangelicals’ participation in social reform movements that shaped America, a focus on the individual remained a hallmark of American evangelicalism into the twentieth century and it illustrates one way in which evangelicalism was of modernity.² Modern conceptions of the self developed in part from the Protestant Reformation, which, “set the individual conscience free from the religious institutions of the Church and exposed it directly to the eye of God.”³ Drawing from the reformatory tradition, evangelicals expressed the personal nature of the individual’s relationship with God, rather than the mediation of that relationship through the Church. Conversion centered on an individual’s “choice,” i.e., making a “decision for Christ.”⁴ However, the fragmentation of the modern subject in late-modernity forced evangelicals, and the larger culture, to grapple with challenges to human agency and to realize the normative power of social structures on individual lives.⁵ As Daniel Rogers argues, Americans in the 1960s and 1970s tried to “reimagine themselves and their society” in an age of fracture that magnified the tensions between “the nature of freedom and obligation in a multicultural and increasingly unequal society.”⁶ The ensuing debates challenged evangelicals to shift the locus of attention from the individual to society. The conflict between these spheres was not new to evangelicals—a group that participated in abolition, prohibition, and child labor reform

struggled consistently with how to be in but not of the world. This historical moment was unique however, for two primary reasons: an upsurge in the number of Americans defining themselves as evangelicals, many of whom transitioned from a more separatist-minded fundamentalism, and the larger context of rapid social change that challenged the individual/social dichotomy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, evangelicals could be identified in part by their focus on personal salvation rather than social reform. In 1972, David Moberg, Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Marquette University, argued that evangelicals tended to embrace “one task—that of winning souls to Christ.”⁷ He felt that the singularity of this mission neglected evangelicals’ historic focus on social issues.⁸ According to Moberg, a “great reversal” in the early 20th century “led to a lopsided emphasis on evangelism and omission of most aspects of the social movement.”⁹ The rhetoric of Billy Graham, the most popular evangelist of the 20th century, gave credence to Moberg’s claims. Graham’s altar calls aimed to regenerate the hearts of individual attendees or viewers, not serve as prophetic indictments of war, poverty, or racism. Yet, the Civil Rights movement, women’s liberation, and the broader context of the Cold War presented a set of social concerns that increasingly required a response from evangelical leaders and institutions. For many evangelicals, much like their predecessors, these issues mattered only in that they “seemed to promote or threaten personal faith.”¹⁰ However, for progressive evangelicals following in the tradition of the social gospel,¹¹ the push for social change represented an opportunity for Christians to participate in God’s kingdom by enacting justice in the world. Thus, evangelicals debated evangelicalism’s locus of attention as the autonomous individual or social structures.

Dual theories of social change rooted these debates. In one view, to change the social structure without changing the sinful individual was useless since sin would simply poison anew the structure. Alternatively, to change the individual without changing the structure was fruitless because the individual would be enmeshed in and shaped by that structure. The tension between individual depravity and social inequality ultimately defined one major struggle for the evangelical movement in a broader moment of self-definition. Evangelicals asked themselves if they would preach a gospel for sinners desperately in need of Jesus to transform their lives or bring the social gospel to bear on poverty and civil rights? In other words, they could purpose the gospel for individual redemption or seek to evangelize corrupt societal structures. These options were not inherently irreconcilable, but they implicated opposing views of sin as an individual evil and/or a social evil. In this chapter, I explore how evangelical leaders and institutions debated the meaning of evangelicalism by using the issue of “social concern” as a proxy to draw boundaries. I argue that Billy Graham and the National Association of Evangelicals dissociated “true” evangelicalism from counterfeit, progressive versions of evangelicalism to privilege personal piety over structural change. In doing so, the expanding evangelical movement fractured over an inability to define corporately the central tenets of evangelicalism.

I first examine this debate through the rhetoric of Billy Graham whose discourse exemplifies an evangelicalism centered on personal salvation. Second, I analyze the dissociative arguments forwarded by evangelicals debating this subject in the NAE. Finally, I turn to contesting declarations made by progressive evangelicals who challenged the NAE and founded new institutions.

Billy Graham and New Birth

Billy Graham rose to fame in the early 1950s as evangelicalism developed synchronously with postwar American life.¹² Robert Wuthnow describes evangelicals as in touch with “the broader mood among postwar leaders” in their optimism “about the possibilities of building on the religious values still prevalent in American society.”¹³ The moment was ripe for a dynamic young preacher like Graham to usher in a new brand of American Christianity. The Charlotte native was “born again” in 1934 at a tent revival and later attended Wheaton College, where he met Ruth Bell, his future wife. After being denied service as a military chaplain, Graham played a key role in Youth for Christ, a parachurch organization that “featured entertainment, patriotic favor, and spiritual uplift.”¹⁴ The YFC environment encouraged Graham to meld Christianity and patriotism to urge people toward Christ. “A producer as well as a product of his age,” Grant Wacker argues, “Graham displayed a remarkable ability to adapt broad cultural trends for his evangelistic purposes.”¹⁵ Graham drew from a cultural milieu saturated with American hopes and anxieties, including nationalism, communism, materialism, and psychotherapy. His worldwide crusades and relationships with U.S. Presidents from Harry Truman to George W. Bush provided multiple platforms for his evangelistic message—accepting Christ as one’s personal savior was the answer to evil in the world. Additionally, Graham founded a variety of Christian media outlets including his popular *Hour of Decision* radio broadcast and *Christianity Today*, the leading evangelical magazine that rivaled *Christian Century* by its ninth issue.¹⁶ “No Christian minister,” Michael Long argues, “has been more influential in global politics, economics, and faith in the twentieth century, for good or ill, than Billy Graham.”¹⁷ Known as the father of modern evangelicalism, Graham

preached in person to almost 215 million people over the course of his career.¹⁸ Thus, any study of American evangelicalism in the mid-late 20th century must account for Graham's reach.¹⁹ In particular, Graham played a dominant role in shaping American evangelicalism's individualistic focus.

The evangelist's clarion call for repentance became more nuanced in later years, but Graham consistently advocated a gospel that essentialized one's born-again experience. Making a personal decision for Christ became the trademark of Graham's altar calls; in his words, "Christ demands a choice."²⁰ In a 1967 sermon, Graham argued that Jesus' call to follow him "is not an emotional appeal to feel sorry for sins and to turn to righteousness. It is not an intellectual appeal to give assent to new doctrine. It is not an ethical appeal to accept the teaching of Jesus and imitate His example. It is not a religious appeal to submit to certain ritual acts or works of penance. It is essentially a personal appeal of unqualified self-commitment to the person of Jesus Christ (Luke w:57)."²¹ In this section of negative definition, Graham exhausted anaphorically several dominant but inadequate ways to interpret Jesus until the audience was left only with a personal commitment to Jesus. The residue structure of the sermon served an important ideological function—self-commitment to Christ, by choice, was the only real option. The last in the phrase was the first and only way to be a Christian. This passage was characteristic of Graham's agent-centered model of evangelism, which eschewed socially oriented demands on the Christian. Graham viewed the purpose of evangelism singularly: urge people to accept Christ as their individual savior. As Thomas Long argues, "all of Graham's public crusade sermons are aimed at a single telos: the conversion of individual hearers."²²

The political and social constraints of Graham's message in the 1960s and 1970s only intensified his efforts to personalize evangelism. A boilerplate for Graham's sermons looked something like this: first, quoting journalists, scholars, or psychiatrists, he argued that his historical moment presented a distinct set of social problems; second, he acknowledged that, while American problems may be uniquely modern, the root cause of these problems, individual sin, was nothing new; finally, he forwarded the gospel as a remedy for the depraved soul of every man, woman, and child. To illustrate how his message worked, let me offer an illustration. Graham engaged in repetition because he spoke regularly to various audiences; thus, by looking at one sermon as a microcosm, a synecdoche for the others, we can get a better sense of how he shaped his focus on the individual.²³

In a 1975 sermon entitled, "Our Problems are Beyond Us," a Winston Churchill quotation, Graham argued that while he and the audience faced "the most critical period in history...yet the basic issues remain unchanged."²⁴ This opening statement functioned as the first allusion to the underlying problem of sin that Graham tied to all social and political problems. Graham unfolded the beginnings of an apparent/real dissociation by first vivifying the apparent problems of the world universally acknowledged by scientists, historians, and journalists.²⁵ Quoting a journalist at length, he noted:

We are living in a night of total crisis. God is dethroned from His central place in the universe. Whole nations are dispossessed to walk directionless upon the cold crust of a cold earth...Two global wars have brought men not to their senses, but to the brink of ultimate disaster. All the parts of the world are simultaneously out of joint...Everywhere men stand at arms. Everywhere they peer into radar screens

... watching, watching, watching. The fellowship of fear is universal.²⁶

Graham developed an argument from authority by quoting various experts, thereby establishing the prevalence of fear in the world. Armament and surveillance had constructed an atmosphere of anxiety that enveloped the American psyche. “Before we can find an answer and a cure,” Graham contended, “we must find a proper diagnosis” by identifying the root cause.²⁷ Graham used the analogy of a doctor’s diagnosis for a complex illness that at the surface seemed like it could be treated with “economic security and education.” Here, Graham developed the “apparent” pair of the dissociation—even though those solutions seemed legitimate, they would fail because society had misdiagnosed its problem. He argued, “We are beginning to realize we were wrong. The problem is much deeper. It is man himself—you and me.”²⁸ The “disease” in this (and every) case was “sin”—that was the real problem.²⁹ Social problems on a micro or macro level were only “reflections of individual problems—yours and mine.”³⁰

As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue, dissociations between the apparent and the real “express a vision of the world” that requires action. The audience is implicated in the dissociation since problems are no longer obscured; the “real” has been revealed.³¹ Graham adapted a preponderance of social concerns to expedite the real need for audience members to commit their lives, in a personal way, to Christ. He framed threats from communism to rising crime rates as rooted in personal sin that required repentance, rather than communal ills that required a theologically robust social agenda. He funneled humanistic doubts and political anxieties through the sieve of the gospel so that almost nothing else mattered but one’s individual repentance before God. Thus, his solution was a simple echo of Jesus to Nicodemus: “Ye must be born again.”³² Graham acknowledged

the mysterious nature of salvation through new birth as something chosen and yet “done for you,”³³ but he insisted that “the birth that Jesus spoke about differs in at least one respect: It is not thrust on you as a natural consequence. You must want it.”³⁴ Graham heightened the role of the individual as the cause for the world’s problems and the impetus for their solutions. His paradigm of social improvement would only come through the individual.

Graham was aware of his role as a kind of arbiter of the faith, and as ecumenical as he sometimes seemed, he used this power to draw boundaries around evangelicalism and frame it as the purest expression of Christianity. In doing so, Graham either neglected or implicitly argued against the social gospel as central to the Christian faith. Although he acknowledged that most evangelicals were “deeply concerned in social concerns,”³⁵ he argued that social concerns did not and should not function as a foundational tenet of evangelicalism. For example, at the first International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, Graham expressed his desire for a biblical definition of evangelicalism that focused on the salvation of souls. He argued that the Congress should hearken back to “the visions and concepts of those great conferences in the early part of this century,” which focused on individual salvation rather than the social gospel.³⁶ Graham noted that a primary reason for the shift away from those early days was the “pre-occupation with social and political problems.”³⁷ As Grant Wacker contends, “Graham rarely if ever used the terms social gospel or social Christianity, which he associated with liberal programs that started at the wrong end, with abstract structures rather than with the persons constituting the structures.”³⁸ Any sort of liberation theology, which considered oppressive governments sinful structures that the gospel could confront and redeem, was

anathema to Graham's understanding of evangelism, which he defined primarily in terms of winning individual souls to Christ.

For Graham, the gospel served sinful individuals whose hearts could be softened, rather than soulless institutions. On some level, Graham conceded, "the corporate guilt of society," but not to the neglect of "the personal redemptive aspect of the Gospel."³⁹ To secure people's rights was a worthy effort, but it was not evangelism. True evangelicals were "united in giving central place to personal faith in Christ as Savior from sin and to commitment to Him."⁴⁰ Another dissociation thus drove Graham's rhetorical construction of evangelicalism—the true and false evangelical. He stated, "today there are many people who think of evangelism as social action and omit entirely the winning of people to a personal relationship with Christ."⁴¹ These individuals practiced a kind of Christianity, but not evangelical Christianity. Evangelicals believed only one's regenerate heart could effect any real change in the world as individual lives were transformed into Christ-likeness. "The nature of God, human nature, moral law" would never change, Graham argued, "You must change."⁴² Graham believed that even though social problems became manifest in new ways across time and space, they were spiritually as old as humankind—a result of original sin.

Graham believed firmly in the doctrine of original sin out of which flowed the need for Christ's transformative power. This doctrine also helped Graham make sense of the problems around him since they could be traced to the same source. Andrew Finstuen argues, "The confusion and chaos of both individual life and global events perhaps seemed less confusing and less chaotic when identified with their common origin in sin. Individual confession of sin, furthermore, promised individuals salvation from eternal

confusion and chaos.”⁴³ Politicians and journalists barraged Graham to stake out his positions on a host of social and political issues. Although he acquiesced on some level, he tended to minimize issues that were not directly relevant to individual belief. Graham repeated this thematic dissociative claim to reframe social problems through the doctrine of sin: “every problem facing us today as Americans is basically a spiritual problem.”⁴⁴ He assumed that society would inevitably improve upon increased conversion and that individual redemption was of the utmost importance. Graham was convinced that “if the Church went back to its main task of proclaiming the Gospel... it would have a far greater impact on the social, moral and psychological needs of men than any other thing it could possibly do.”⁴⁵ Personal transformation was an inevitable effect of conversion.

Furthermore, one’s personal obedience to God (or lack thereof) had deeper implications for the nation and the evangelical’s role as citizen. By focusing so much on the individual, Graham and others like him tended to edge out issues surrounding social inequality. His individualistic theology suited a comfortable relationship with the state insofar as it did not threaten popular modes of evangelical expression in public and private spheres. Graham depicted the Christian as “a polite accommodationist who would recognize the state as a servant of God, deserving of respect, honor, and obedience.”⁴⁶ As Heather Elkins argues: “Graham’s style of evangelism is the embodiment of this understanding of an individual as a voluntary, responsible agent, a citizen in the realm of God and the state.”⁴⁷ Thus, for Graham, good citizenship translated as personal piety.

In Grant Wacker’s estimation, “Graham’s presence constituted the electromagnetic center of the post-war evangelical movement. His voice settled discussions.”⁴⁸ Indeed, we have a plethora of reasons to believe that Graham shaped

evangelical culture in deep and lasting ways. Yet, a word from Graham did not silence debate. Evangelicals expressed their convictions about the role of the individual with some variance and they often did so through evangelical institutions and congresses, which served as key spaces to work out the meaning of evangelicalism in 20th century America.

The National Association of Evangelicals

For a broad spectrum of evangelicals like Billy Graham, individual salvation constituted the heart of evangelicalism. Staunch defenders of this view dominated the ranks and leadership of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), a leading organization in the postwar resurgence of evangelicalism. More progressive members of the organization, however, challenged the apparent individualistic focus of the NAE and argued for the centrality of the social gospel. Extant records of NAE correspondence show that members debated the most basic definition of evangelism and, by extension, what it meant to be an evangelical. According to Axel Shafer, in the early days of the NAE it “thrived on its broad, inclusive appeal, but also contained the germs of theological infighting, institutional fragmentation, and political division.”⁴⁹ By the 1960s and 1970s, the NAE was rife with contention over the centrality of the individual and the social implications of the gospel.

The NAE attempted to moderate this debate, but points of breakage within the NAE reflected larger fractures among evangelicals nationwide. In 1968, Clyde Taylor, General Director of the NAE, noted, “Mentioning social action or social concern in a denominationally mixed group of protestants, or even among members of the same

denomination, is definitely an invitation to discussion. Sometimes this discussion may be practical and express definite concern. More often it is extreme and unfruitful. Always it involves disagreement.”⁵⁰ He continued, “Many protestants, in a desperate struggle to react to what they feel is wrong, have jumped the pendulum at either extreme, evidently feeling that a moderate view would be classified as compromise.”⁵¹ The NAE was a microcosm of the polarization that Taylor identified among American protestants. According to Molly Worthen, “The NAE has never claimed more than a fraction of American Evangelicals among its formal membership, but it has remained a bellwether of moderate Evangelical opinion.”⁵² Therefore, by examining how the NAE positioned itself on social and theological issues we can get a good sense of the pulse of evangelicalism at a given moment. From the late 1960s through most of the 1970s, the NAE embraced a theory a social change that prioritized individual salvation and sanctification over structural change. I now turn to a discussion of how the NAE used its organizational authority, through institutional statements and committees, to draw boundaries around evangelicalism, excluding social concern as an essential of the faith.

In 1967, the NAE resolved in its 25th anniversary manifesto: “In the present age the everlasting Gospel is challenged not only from without, but tragically from within the household of faith. New forms of commitment are suggested which apparently have as their aim a radically new mission for the Church of Jesus Christ. One hears increasingly of a mission of evangelization, not of individual persons, but of the structures of society.”⁵³ In an effort to combat this challenge, the NAE reaffirmed “a mission of evangelism to salvation” which it deemed “the sole and sufficient preoccupation of the church.”⁵⁴ Manifestos usually function by defining the authoring group in opposition to

the status quo, thereby marking a break from the prevailing culture.⁵⁵ This manifesto defined evangelicalism in opposition to social change movements prevalent in the broader culture, but particularly threatening in evangelical sub-culture wherein that focus could potentially displace the mission to save individuals. In a somewhat odd move for a manifesto, then, the NAE focused less on breaking away from the status quo and more on continuity with Church tradition. The manifesto reaffirmed the NAE's mission via a framing of Church tradition that transcended time and space. The mission of "evangelism to salvation" served as the ultimate normative power that anchored evangelicalism. Molly Worthen suggests that evangelicals often "prefer to think their faith indistinguishable from the faith of Christ's apostles, and scoff at history's claims on them."⁵⁶ Likewise, the manifesto writers assumed their interpretation of the Gospel, in continuity with the writers of the gospels, remained clear and unchanged through time as a mission to save sinful individuals. While the NAE positioned itself on the side of the "everlasting Gospel," others within the faith advocated "new forms of commitment" with a "radically new mission for the Church." Thus, the manifesto "othered" those who sought to revise the course of the Church by arguing that they rejected the true mission of the Gospel. In doing so, the NAE's manifesto neglected to recognize that evangelicalism in America was made up of multiple traditions. The passive language that referenced those "within the household of faith" suggested that no one within the NAE, the legitimate voice of evangelicalism, felt this way. The elusive, "one hears..." implied that revisionists were nearby, but not in attendance. Ultimately, by asserting the sufficiency of personal evangelism, the NAE shaped the agenda of American evangelicalism in the image of the individual. The manifesto is best understood as a statement of institutional authority that

marginalized and silenced members of the NAE who contested this view of the gospel. Bruce Lincoln describes the religious institution as an authoritative body “that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value.”⁵⁷ The NAE’s manifesto certainly illustrated these practices. It drew boundaries around what could be considered “evangelism” by asserting its transcendent meaning in essentialist terms.

Although the NAE promoted individual salvation as the central mark of the faith, that did not preclude it from engaging social issues tangential to evangelization. As NAE members participated in social action, the framers of these activities articulated carefully their purpose and approach, emphasizing the role of personal piety and sanctification rather than broad social change. By analyzing the NAE’s partnership with National Negro Evangelical Association and its Commission on Social Concern we can understand what constituted appropriate social action and what that revealed about the NAE’s theory of social change.

In the mid-late 1960s, the NAE partnered with the National Negro Evangelical Association in two ministry efforts: a pulpit exchange and an evangelism campaign in Watts, California. In a generic letter to pastors in the Los Angeles area, Thomas A. Erikson, the Chairman of the NAE-NNEA Joint Committee, wrote that on “race relations Sunday” pastors should to do a pulpit exchange between black and white churches. He explained, “The topics of the exchange sermons are to be evangelical in nature. That is, we will not address ourselves to the race problem as such in someone else’s pulpit. Our very presence in an exchange situation, proclaiming Christ to Christian brethren will

speak far more loudly than pronouncements on segregation or Black Power.”⁵⁸ Erikson’s assertion that topics should be “evangelical in nature” directed pastors to address matters of individual change. Members of both the NAE and NNEA agreed that the symbolism of the act was at least a step toward racial reconciliation during the most segregated time in America—Sunday mornings. Additionally, a joint committee of the NAE and NNEA set out in July 1966 to engage in an evangelism campaign across greater Los Angeles. The exigency of this campaign was no doubt the 1965 race riots in Watts and the “disorder” expected in the area the following summer by “Communists and Black Nationalist groups.”⁵⁹ The joint committee planned tract-distribution, youth rallies, prayer, and gospel broadcasts by Rev. Howard Jones, “Billy Graham Negro Associate Evangelist,” to placate social unrest.⁶⁰ Thus, NAE efforts to improve race relations focused primarily on symbolic acts of reconciliation and saving individuals, which reflected the NAE’s theory of social change through the individual. Its efforts belie the NAE’s suspicion of social action without attention to its central mission of evangelism to salvation. Although the NAE’s partnership with the NNEA provides one example of its posture towards social issues surrounding race, the NAE articulated its stance on a variety of social issues through its Commission on Social Concern.

The NAE’s Commission on Social Concern (CSC), formerly the Commission on Social Action until 1965, was responsible for defining relevant social issues and providing churches with the resources to engage those issues.⁶¹ Through its agenda-setting power, the CSC fostered interest in issues of personal morality rather than developing broad programs for social activism. For example, at its 1970 Kansas convention “emphasis was given to three areas of concern: 1. The inner-city challenge; 2.

Pornography; and 3. Sex education in the public schools.”⁶² Two years later, CSC members ranked the following topics in priority of importance: inner-city evangelism, pre-marital counseling, abortion, drug abuse, homosexuality, gambling, alcohol, increase in crime, racism, ecology, social disease.⁶³ The theme of the “inner-city” became a recurring topic for the CSC as members attempted to construct a response to poverty and racism that focused on individual change. An NAE press release on President Johnson’s Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders noted its recommendation that millions be spent on “the urban ghettos of our nation.” Clyde Taylor, the Director of NAE’s Washington operation argued, “What the Commission doesn’t say at all; what LIFE magazine only hints at and what we evangelicals have known all along, lies in the essence of the individual.”⁶⁴ Taylor implied that evangelicals’ knowledge of individual agency, under the guidance of the Lord, was unique. Their recognition of the power and potential of individual change defined the NAE’s response to challenges from the secular world and fellow “evangelicals.” Thus, the CSC continually addressed social concerns through ministries to individuals. In the Commission’s 1973 report to the NAE Board of Administration, T.E. Gannon, the Chairman of the Commission wrote, “It is still our firm conviction that a solution for all social ills is found in the scripture and can be obtained through a personal experience with Christ.”⁶⁵ Saved individuals were change agents.

Extant files reveal that some NAE members opposed the NAE’s focus on the individual, but this opposition only gained strength in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rufus Jones, the Executive Director of the NAE Social Action Commission at that time, argued that many “who think of themselves as biblical evangelicals” were not aware of their own history or the role of social justice as “an integral part of the gospel itself.”⁶⁶

Jones thus contested the claims in the NAE's 1967 manifesto that the gospel could be essentialized as a mission for individual salvation and that evangelical traditions excluded the social gospel. He invited John Perkins, an African American evangelical and civil rights activist, to several CSC meetings. Perkins postulated that the gospel had been dichotomized between the "liberal church" and the "evangelical church."⁶⁷ He argued:

We have the evangelical church which has been caught for so many years in the proclamation of the gospel—just telling people how to come to Christ without any responsibility to the social, political and environmental needs of these people.

This gospel says, 'I don't have to change peoples' lives; I don't have to empower people; I am not responsible for the community in which these people live.' The messengers of this gospel cannot call our society to accountability and justice.

What happens then is the syncretism of the Church with a world system which oppresses people. Once this union of the Church and the system takes place we find ourselves thinking that it is our responsibility to uphold the system instead of seeing ourselves as the people of God, the prophetic voice of God.⁶⁸

Perkins refuted the idea that Christians, a people of the New Covenant, should cast off Old Testament prophetic tradition. He argued that the Church should critique publicly oppression; otherwise, its witness for Christ would be incomplete. Appropriating prophetic tradition in this way, however, coded Perkins as a liberal. While mainstream evangelicals focused on social change through individual salvation, protestant liberals turned increasingly to the prophets or prophetic vision as a justification for radical social action, a strategy modeled by civil rights leaders.⁶⁹ Like the latter, Perkins named the neglect of poor black communities in America as structural sin. No other voice within the

NAE, even those sympathetic to social issues like poverty and racial inequality, made this leap. Yet, he did so with some regularity in the early 1980s within CSC meetings. Despite the increasing openness to social concern within the NAE by 1980, in its earlier and more influential years, the NAE disregarded meaningful dialogue on the issue.

Leaders within the NAE, however, did not disagree with Perkins's dichotomization thesis on the split between liberals and evangelicals. They were openly loath to link evangelism and social action because the latter was seen as part of a liberal Protestant tradition. On no other issue was evangelicalism's hangover from the fundamentalist/modernist split in the early decades of the 20th century more evident.⁷⁰ Molly Worthen notes, "large-scale social activism was contaminated by association with the enemy: those heterodox liberals who did not merely live out the gospel through good deeds, but seemed to believe that good deeds might replace the gospel altogether."⁷¹ Like Graham, many NAE members with fundamentalist roots feared that encouraging sustained attention to social justice threatened the seriousness of the doctrine of sin. For example, Gannon argued, "the social gospel advocates and members of the activists generation challenge the Spirit-filled church of Jesus Christ, to give social concerns top priority. They insist that mere preaching is not enough—the minister, and the church as a church, should be involved in social action. Let me quickly say that any church that tries to deal with social ills without meeting the spiritual needs of the individual is treating only symptoms without providing a cure of man's basic disease—SIN."⁷² "Sin" was the trump card outing activist members as disguised liberals who promoted the capacity for collective action over and against the reality of the degenerate human heart. Again, we see the clashing theories of social change animated by different accounts of the human

condition. The liberal view, that humans could improve themselves and collectively improve their world opposed the conservative evangelical view that original sin would always poison human structures.

One effect of the intense focus on individual sin and salvation became the heightened orientation to individualism more generally. The NAE's political investments reflected this orientation. Although the NAE often denied its organizational involvement in the political sphere, it urged members to act individually. In 1971, the CSC published the results of consultation sought on a variety of issues including pornography, prayer, abortion, and the conscientious objector. The consultant, Dr. Robert Cook argued, "the individual Christian should inject what he takes to be some of the Gospel's implications into the politics of his nation or his world."⁷³ According to Clyde Taylor, the Director of NAE's Washington Operation and later its General Director, "A war that seems to be spreading to other fronts, a steady increase in crime and a thousand other unresolved issues face us as Americans. In our country the part of the individual citizen and his responsibility to his government is becoming increasingly more important. Our country is being swept into situations and problems which a structured government cannot remedy without the help of the individual. This need provides an opportunity for the Christian which will benefit both his country and his message."⁷⁴ Taylor acknowledged that the NAE believed in the separation of church and state but stated, "unless Christians as citizens get involved—non-Christians will."⁷⁵ The NAE's Office of Public Affairs offered seminars on citizenship that encouraged evangelicals to pursue careers in federal service in order to influence public policy. This sort of move from evangelical organizations like the NAE and others solidified public perceptions of evangelicals as

implacable social conservatives invested in issues of personal morality like abortion and school prayer. However, the definitional battles within evangelicalism raged on as “social concern” functioned continually as a point of fracture.

Evangelical Declarations

Thus far, I have examined impulses within the NAE that sought to draw boundaries around evangelism, elevating individual salvation and marginalizing social activism. In order to understand the perceived threat of revisions to “evangelism” by the “evangelical left,”⁷⁶ I now turn to an exploration of contesting evangelical declarations in the 1970s that outlined the purposes of evangelism and its relationship to social action. Ron Sider, who played a central role in drafting the socially conscious Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, stated, “It is no secret that an extremely important and often sharp and divisive debate currently rages among Christians over both the meaning of evangelism and salvation and the relationship of evangelism to social justice.”⁷⁷ He cited The World Council of Churches Bangkok Consultation on Salvation Today (Jan., 1973), The Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (Nov., 1973), the Response to the Chicago Declaration by the Division of Church and Society of the National Council of Churches (1974), and the Lausanne Covenant (1974). All of these statements either affirmed or contested the others’ normative definitions of evangelicalism.⁷⁸ For years, evangelicals had marshaled implicit claims about what it meant to be an evangelical, using terms like biblical infallibility and social concern as proxies to include or exclude certain views. As evangelical progressives lost ground within the NAE, which didn’t endorse the Chicago Declaration, they founded separate

organizations including Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA), led by Sider, which still functions as a progressive voice within evangelicalism.⁷⁹ The story of the Chicago Declaration serves as an exemplar for the ways in which progressive evangelicals constructed a theologically robust evangelical social ethic.

In 1973, a group of evangelicals, many of whom were members of the NAE, including Rufus Jones and John Perkins, formed a planning committee for a workshop on evangelicals for social concern. Sider reached out to evangelicals he thought might be interested in attending such a workshop. He wrote, “A conservative religious tide is sweeping the country. Will evangelicals meet the challenge and take advantage of this historic opportunity by proclaiming the biblical message of concern for the whole man? Or will a one-sided evangelicalism help to provide an excuse for a revival of theological liberalism by proclaiming and living a truncated message?”⁸⁰ The “whole man” became a unifying concept for evangelicals who viewed the social gospel as central and complementary to the salvation of souls. This concept distinguished progressive evangelicals from both evangelical conservatives whom they felt neglected social ethics and theological liberals who minimized personal salvation. Rufus Jones, the Executive Director of the NAE Social Action Commission, agreed with Sider on the need to take advantage of evangelicalism’s cultural power to shape a more comprehensive social agenda. He responded, “You have very clearly articulated my own convictions concerning a congress on social ethics. Your analysis of the religious situation in America is quite accurate when you say the liberal theology and politics are in shambles, that a conservative religious tide is sweeping the country, and also that evangelicals will be the dominant religious influence in the 70’s.”⁸¹ Jones expressed disappointment with

previous evangelical congresses and conventions including Key '73 and the World Congress on Evangelism in 1966 where he felt leaders neglected the social gospel. But Jones was the General Director of the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society; he was no mouthpiece for the political left. Jones told Sider:

The primary focus of any congress that we might sponsor should be on social ethics rather than a political movement. I believe that we need to show the relevance of social issues to sound evangelical theology. The liberals took the social and ethical teachings of the Bible out of its context and placed it within the context of their humanistic presuppositions. Evangelicals fail to discern between that which is biblical and that which is not. As a result, they reject the whole package including important biblical truth.⁸²

Jones's accusations about hijacked biblical principles reveal that even among progressive evangelicals, a liberal political agenda fit poorly with the evangelical's worldview. We might assume that he disagreed with policies that implied the perfectibility of man. Like many other evangelicals, Jones embraced an orthodox view of human nature and original sin, which probably drove his critique of "humanistic presuppositions." According to Jones, evangelicals had rightly rejected liberal policies since they denied the reality of human sin. However, he argued that an evangelical congress on social concern could sway theologically conservative evangelicals who had ignored biblical principles of social concern because of the way those principles had been appropriated and tainted by liberals. Again, the argument for this group of evangelicals centered on the "whole man," taking seriously the doctrine of original sin and framing the gospel as holistic ministry to people, body and soul.

By November 1973, Sider successfully banded a group of 53 evangelicals who became the original signers of the Chicago Declaration. But, agreeing on a declaration that was broad enough in principle to be inclusive and specific enough to be meaningful was a difficult task. An initial draft of the statement elicited this comment from David Moberg, a workshop member:

As the statement stands currently, I suspect that about 75% of the evangelicals would immediately react to one or another of the numerous specifics which they would identify as directly contradictory to what ‘they know’ to be the ‘true Biblical teachings.’ Spotting even one such passage contradicting their accepted version of Christian social ethics, they might give no attention whatever to all the rest and the venture might be lost...I hope I am wrong in this pessimistic appraisal of the situation we face! If, however, we immediately alienate the audience that most needs our message, how far will we get?⁸³

Moberg’s concerns reflected two important points about the declaration. First, American evangelicals as a whole were the target audience—the purpose of the Thanksgiving workshop was not simply to provide a space for progressive evangelicals to wax on about the social gospel among themselves. They hoped to influence a broad evangelical audience even as they worried about catering too much to conservatives. As one workshopper put it, “We will have to make some very important decisions as to what segment of the evangelical community we are addressing ourselves to. How far will we compromise?”⁸⁴ Second, the workshopers recognized that a larger body of social knowledge, with assumptions about the meaning of evangelism and true biblical teachings, circulated among evangelicals. By 1973 “social concern” was already a proxy

for “liberal” and among some evangelicals, it had become a sort of devil term in itself. Moberg’s musings illustrate that he understood larger signifiers across evangelical discourse as rhetorical constraints. Michael McGee’s fragmentation thesis helps explain the significance of that. McGee argues that texts are actually “larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent.”⁸⁵ The workshopers had to imagine their final text by fashioning together fragments of evangelical discourse to invent something new—a declaration bound to some premises they hoped to refute. But even as they anticipated the audience’s reactions to certain premises, the text would be ultimately constructed by a broad evangelical audience. The key implication was then how the declaration writers would seek to repurpose these premises or fragments of cultural knowledge imbedded in the declaration.

In its final form, the Chicago Declaration appeared steadfast in its commitment to articulate Christian requirements of love and social justice without much compromise, but the declaration writers expressed those requirements within a theologically orthodox framework. The declaration began, “As evangelical Christians committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the full authority of the Word of God, we affirm that God lays total claim upon the lives of his people.”⁸⁶ By beginning in this way, the signees constituted themselves first as evangelicals who embraced the authority of the Bible; thus, they implicitly refuted claims that they were revisionists or radicals. The declaration continued, “We cannot, therefore, separate our lives in Christ from the situation in which God has placed us in the United States and the world.”⁸⁷ Here, the declaration contextualized the faith—bringing the Bible to bear on the lives of those who called themselves evangelicals. The language echoed the epistles’ common refrain “therefore”

as a mark of requirement.⁸⁸ In other words, *because* they believed in the authority of scripture they had to engage with the world. The declaration signers also appropriated confessional language as they confessed to several prominent sins within the American evangelical community: racism, sexism, materialism, economic injustice, and militarism. Confessions can, of course, be deeply personal, but many evangelical denominations used communal confessions in church services. Thus, what might have been seen as an acknowledgement of structural sin could also be interpreted as nothing more radical than corporate confession on a Sunday.

Of the sins confessed, the most pronounced concerned race. The Declaration stated, “We deplore the historic involvement of the church in America with racism and the conspicuous responsibility of the evangelical community for perpetuating the personal attitudes and institutional structures that have divided the body of Christ along color lines.”⁸⁹ Here, the writers critiqued the personal and structural nature of sin instead of focusing merely on interpersonal exchanges of racism.⁹⁰ Indeed, the declaration linked all of the confessed sins to broader structures of society and the rhetoric that reified those structures. For example, the declaration writers decried the dangers of melding patriotism and Christian faith, and by doing so they rejected neat narratives of American exceptionalism popular in evangelical rhetoric. Renouncing a national culture of militarism and materialism, they stated, “We must resist the temptation to make the nation and its institutions objects of near-religious loyalty.”⁹¹ The declaration implied that evangelicals had made an idol of American capitalism and military might. In this, the writers echoed Martin Luther King, Jr. whose “attack on American militarism frequently depicted it as a corrosive and corruptive force.” For example, King stated in his Riverside

address, “A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift” was “approaching spiritual death.”⁹² The declaration likewise asserted a more global view of Christianity that affirmed the value of all lives, including the poor and non-American.

Couched in the language of repentance, the Declaration ultimately demanded that evangelicals take seriously the biblical call for justice and “total discipleship” to the “complete claims on God on our lives.”⁹³ The declaration concluded, “We proclaim no new gospel, but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹⁴ Although the declaration espoused somewhat controversial claims about the meaning of evangelicalism within the evangelical community, the declaration framed its writers’ words and actions in continuity with the Gospel. What they advocated, they argued, was nothing new in the long history of Christianity. The workshopers thus borrowed a key argumentative strategy employed by the NAE in its manifesto, which insisted on its preservation of the timeless nature of Gospel. This argument by tradition functioned particularly well for the workshopers because one of their primary exigencies was the matter of appearing outside of or beyond tradition. By constructing an argument from tradition, the declaration writers performed a kind of reclamation of the normative meaning of “evangelical” in America.

The declaration, like the NAE’s manifesto, also served a constitutive function. The ideas laid out in the declaration constituted evangelicals as a people of faith and social concern. More importantly, the declaration showed that evangelical faith and social concern were inseparable. The ideal evangelical that emerged from the Chicago Declaration understood the relationship between Christ’s redemptive work on the cross

and the Christian's redemptive task in the world—to work for peace and justice. Danielle Allen argues, “the art of democratic writing entails understanding how to contribute to the collective mind to produce the shared vocabulary that we citizens will use to live together.”⁹⁵ The Chicago Declaration equipped evangelicals with the vocabulary, already circulating among progressives, to articulate the role of the evangelical in the world as an agent of change from a heavenly kingdom.

Richard Pierard, a workshopper, expressed hope that the Chicago meeting would “draw the maximum amount of attention possible to the burning need for the recovery of a viable evangelical social ethic for the last quarter of the twentieth century.”⁹⁶ The Declaration certainly gained attention from a swath of spectators in and outside of the church. Roy Larson of the *Chicago Sun-Times* projected, “Someday American church historians may write that the most significant church-related event of 1973 took place last week at the YMCA hotel on S. Wabash” and the *Washington Post* reported that the declaration “could well change the face of both religion and politics in America.” Attendees left the workshop encouraged that they had pricked the hearts of evangelicals on the left and the right, but they ultimately severed ties from mainstream evangelical organizations like the NAE in order to achieve their vision.

The years between the Chicago Declaration and the formation of Evangelicals for Social Action in 1978 revealed the ambivalence of evangelicals toward social action as an integral part of their faith. Ron Sider and others formed ESA just a year before Jerry Falwell organized the Moral Majority. Also, leading evangelical figures were still loath to give definitional ground to social concern when establishing the central meaning of evangelicalism. At the first International Congress on World Evangelization, attendees

drafted The Lausanne Covenant of 1974, under the leadership of Billy Graham. The covenant distinguished carefully the meaning of evangelism versus social responsibility.

It declared:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.⁹⁷

In a separate section on Christian social responsibility the covenant read, “Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ.”⁹⁸ Through parallel structure and negative definition, this passage attempted to clarify the relationship of evangelism to social concern even as it refuted the activities of social concern as “evangelism.” Before the Chicago Declaration, this section may not have been included in the Lausanne Covenant; at least in the way it negotiated social concern. The majority of American evangelicals may not have counted themselves in the company of ESA, but the Chicago Declaration forced evangelicals to

parse out how and why social concern mattered to a faith dominated by messages to individual sinners and saints.

Conclusion

In the 1960s and 1970s, the evangelical movement fractured. The fault-line of social concern separated mainstream evangelicals from what became a progressive minority of evangelicals. By the 1980s, the formerly moderate NAE became somewhat obsolete as more polarizing organizations like Moral Majority and Focus on the Family emerged on the right and Sojourners and ESA emerged on the left. One primary reason underlying this point of fracture: dual theories of social change. The first view insisted on individual sin as the root problem and individual redemption as the potential solution to societal ills. Another theory pointed to structural inequality and the corporate sin of America for perpetuating oppression. In the latter view, only evangelizing corrupt structures would bring lasting change. Evangelicals had a difficult time embracing the second view as a solution because it resonated too closely with liberal notions of collective human potential. A plethora of evangelical and fundamentalist thinkers bemoaned “secular humanism” as disastrous example of human hubris in an attempt to displace God.⁹⁹

Ultimately, both mainstream and progressive evangelicals recognized the gravity of human sin, but mainstream evangelicals more successfully framed that reality as a primary exigency. If every social evil boiled down to human sin, mainstream evangelicals argued, then saving souls should be the sole and sufficient purpose of evangelism, and evangelism was then the essential task of the evangelical. Billy Graham and the NAE

constructed the definition of evangelicalism primarily through negation—it was not anything else but evangelizing individuals. By understanding what evangelicalism was not, audiences could easily identify counterfeit definitions. Thus, anyone who claimed to be an evangelical but did not adhere to the “true” definition of evangelism was resisted as an outsider. Graham and the NAE used the appearance/reality type of dissociation as a powerful argumentative tool to define evangelicals as an exclusive group of Christians. The dissociation worked by framing progressive appearances of “evangelicalism” as deceptive. For Christian audiences, keen to recognize their susceptibility to deception, this framing unveiled the temptation to broaden the definition of evangelicalism to include “social concern” as a central focus of the faith and thereby exchange it with the “real” definition of evangelicalism. Mikhail M. Bakhtin argues, “As a result of the work done by...stratifying forces in language, there are no ‘neutral’ words and forms— words and forms that can belong to ‘no one’; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents.”¹⁰⁰ The dissociations employed by Graham and the NAE might be understood as some of these “stratifying forces” because they associated certain terms within or outside of the evangelical agenda. “Social concern” became a term “shot through” with the “intentions and accents” of secular liberals or well-intentioned but misguided Christians. The implication for “social concerns” meant that not only were they secondary aims, but they needed to be approached through the lens of personal change.

Progressive evangelicals sought to contextualize the gospel in their world, but they seemed less able to explain the relationship of sin to corrupt institutions, and thereby develop clear solutions. Their arguments from Christian tradition that asserted a gospel

message for the whole man refuted claims that they were radical. Despite their efforts to distinguish themselves from mainline and secular liberals, however, by borrowing the language of social movements external to evangelical circles, they became tainted by association.

¹ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 233.

² Ibid., 234.

³ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 603.

⁴ Martin Marty, "The Revival of Evangelicalism and Southern Religion," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, ed. David E. Harrell Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), 14-15.

⁵ See Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1966), 228.

⁶ Daniel T. Rogers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 10.

⁷ David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 20.

⁸ For further reading on evangelical social activism see also Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties, and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁹ Moberg, *The Great Reversal*, 26.

¹⁰ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 233.

¹¹ Walter Rauschenbusch wrote, "Whoever uncouples the religious and the social life has not understood Jesus." Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (London and New York: The MacMillan Company, 1908), 48.

¹² Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 14.

¹³ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 178.

¹⁴ Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 8.

¹⁵ Grant Wacker, "Billy Graham's America," *Church History* 78, no. 3 (2009): 497.

¹⁶ Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 15.

¹⁷ *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections of America's Greatest Evangelist* ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), xiii.

¹⁸ Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 21.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, little has been written on Billy Graham within rhetorical studies.

²⁰ Billy Graham, "Coming Storm," August 23, 1964, p. 10, Collection 265, Box 21, Folder 56, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.

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- ²¹ Billy Graham, "Biblical Conversion," September 12, 1967, pp. 11-12, Collection 265, Box 8, Folder 12, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ²² Thomas G. Long, "Preaching the Good News," in *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections of America's Greatest Evangelist*, ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 9.
- ²³ The Billy Graham Center Archives has 66,000 pages of sermon notes, many of which illustrate that he recycled sermons. These are available at <https://public.share.wheaton.edu/sites/BGCArchives/BGSermons/Forms/AllItems.aspx#>
- ²⁴ Billy Graham, "Are Our Problems Beyond Us?," March 30, 1975, p. 1, Collection 265, Box 20, Folder 12, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ²⁵ Ibid. In this sermon, Graham quoted Winston Churchill, William Vogt, Albert Einstein, Michael Amrine, among others.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 2-3.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 8.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 8-9.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 12.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 10.
- ³¹ Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 420.
- ³² Billy Graham, "Are Our Problems Beyond Us?," p. 16.
- ³³ Ibid., 21
- ³⁴ Ibid., 25
- ³⁵ Billy Graham, "Remarks at Christianity Today 25th Anniversary Luncheon," July 31, 1981, p. 8, Collection 265, Box 21, Folder 5, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ³⁶ Billy Graham, "Why Lausanne?," July 16, 1974, p. 28, Collection 265, Box 8, Folder 64, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 29.
- ³⁸ Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 43.
- ³⁹ Billy Graham, "Confusion About Evangelism," January 15, 1980, p. 4, Collection 265, Box 21, Folder 70, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁴⁰ Billy Graham, "Remarks at Christianity Today 25th Anniversary Luncheon," p. 6.
- ⁴¹ Billy Graham, "Confusion About Evangelism," p. 4.
- ⁴² Billy Graham, "Things That Never Change," June 25, 1976, Collection 265, Box 16, Folder 89, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁴³ Andrew S. Finstuen, *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 131.
- ⁴⁴ Billy Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," November 22, 1976, p. 20, Collection 265, Box 25, Folder 1, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁴⁵ Billy Graham, "Confusion About Evangelism," p. 14.
- ⁴⁶ Michael G. Long, *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 31.
- ⁴⁷ Heather Murray Elkins, "The Tangible Evangelism of Billy Graham" in *The Legacy of Billy*

Graham: Critical Reflections of America's Greatest Evangelist, ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 22.

⁴⁸ Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 99.

⁴⁹ Axel R. Shafer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 10.

⁵⁰ Clyde Taylor, "Evangelical Perspective," March 11, 1968, Program 14, Box 66, Folder 16/17, The National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Molly Worthen, "National Association of Evangelicals," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol 2 ed. Lynn Dumenil, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 62.

⁵³ Minutes of General Convention Business Session, April 5, 1967, p. 6, Box 31, Folder 4, The National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁵ James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 353.

⁵⁶ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4. See my earlier discussion of the link between evangelicalism and modernity. The manifesto does not exhibit the kind of self-consciousness that recognized what they understood as tradition was "new" in some sense.

⁵⁷ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7.

⁵⁸ Thomas A. Erikson to Pastor, Jan 22, 1968, Box 15, Folder 114, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁵⁹ Joint Committee, Los Angeles Pilot Project, NAE-NNEA, "Your Report on Evangelical Action in Watts and South Los Angeles," June 28, 1966, p. 1, Box 15, Folder 114, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

⁶¹ "Statement of Purpose," Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶² "Report of Social Concern Commission," Oct 5-6, 1970, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶³ T.E. Gannon to Executive Committee, Commission on Social Action, October 27, 1972, p. 2, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁴ Clyde Taylor, "Evangelical Perspective," March 18, 1968, Program: 18, Box 66, Folder 16/17, The National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁵ T.E. Gannon, "Report to the NAE Board of Administration by the Evangelical Social Action Commission," Oct 8-9 1973, p. 1, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁶ Rufus Jones to Members of Social Action Commission, April 14, 1981, Box 58, Folder: Social Action Commission pre-1984, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁷ Perkins continues to be a leading voice among racial reconciliation within American evangelicalism

⁶⁸ John Perkins, "Lost and Found Identity," March 7, 1979, p. 2, Box 58, Folder: Social Action Commission pre-1984, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁹ Martin Luther King often quoted Micah 6:8, "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." He and other civil rights leaders appropriated the prophets to argue against systematic oppression and poverty. Abraham Heschel's influential book *The Prophets* was also published in 1962.

⁷⁰ William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992). Evangelicalism in midcentury America developed out of progressive fundamentalism, which opposed modern hermeneutics.

⁷¹ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 178.

⁷² T.E. Gannon, "Evangelism and Social Concern," Oct. 1-4, 1971, p. 1, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷³ Robert Cook, "The Church and Political Involvement," Jan. 15-16, 1971, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁴ Clyde Taylor, "Evangelical Perspective," Feb 26, 1968, Program: 1-4, Box 66, Folder 16/17, The National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Although some scholars use this term, it can be misleading politically. Some progressive evangelicals took explicit stances on political issues, but many were committed to making arguments about social action purely from a biblical framework, which implicated activism of the church, not government.

⁷⁷ Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships," p. 251, Box 58, Folder: Social Action Commission pre1984, The National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁸ See David Zarefsky's discussion of essentially contestable terms. He argues that those terms "acquire meaning only dialectically, in relation to their opposites. They therefore are flexible in their application. Since their meaning is not fixed, they offer opportunities for an advocate to identify his or her position with the term and take advantage of its presumably favorable or unfavorable connotation." David Zarefsky, "Strategic Maneuvering through Persuasive Definitions: Implications for Dialectic and Rhetoric," *Argumentation* 20, no. 4 (2006): 405.

⁷⁹ Similar organizations also developed around this time. Sojourners, led by Jim Wallis, also began in the early 1970s.

⁸⁰ Ron Sider to Richard Pierard, June 18, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Correspondence March 1973-March 1974, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸¹ Rufus Jones to Ron Sider, March 30, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Correspondence March 1973-March 1974, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ David Moberg to Ron Sider, Nov. 6, 1973, p. 2, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Correspondence March 1973-March 1974, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸⁴ Paul B. Henry to Ron Sider, Aug 23, 1973, p. 2, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Correspondence March 1973-March 1974, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸⁵ Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, eds. John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 71.

⁸⁶ A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, Nov. 25, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ For example, Philippians 2:1, 2 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 9:26, Romans 5:12.

⁸⁹ A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, Nov. 25, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁹⁰ Prominent African American evangelicals, William Pannell and John Perkins, who had both written on racism within American evangelicalism signed onto the document.

⁹¹ A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, Nov. 25, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁹² John M. Murphy and James Jasinski, "Time, Space, and Generic Reconstitution: Martin Luther King's 'A Time to Break Silence' as Radical Jeremiad," in *Public Address and Moral Judgment: Critical Studies in Ethical Tensions*, ed. Trevor Parry Giles (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 106.

⁹³ A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, Nov. 25, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014), 45.

⁹⁶ Richard Pierard to Ron Sider, March 26, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Correspondence March 1973-March 1974, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁹⁷ "The Lausanne Covenant," accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984).

¹⁰⁰ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 293.

CHAPTER 3

THE WOMAN QUESTION: DOMESTICITY AND LIBERATION

The Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 1970s produced ambivalent responses from evangelicals, a group that struggled historically with women's place at home, in the church, and in the world. Conservative evangelicals resisted second-wave feminism. Instead of joining the women's movement, they reified traditional theological and cultural frameworks that resonated with their fundamentalist roots. In the early 20th century, fundamentalists tied the ideal woman to the home—she was virtuous and devoted to her domestic duties. In large part, this renaissance of the Victorian “angel in the house” image arose in response to first-wave feminism, which encouraged “shifting sexual mores” and “an increasingly public role for women.”¹ Molly Worthen argues that conservative evangelicals responded to second-wave feminism in a similar way: “they built upon this Victorian notion of ‘separate spheres’ for each sex.”² Gender ideologies driving midcentury evangelicals' behavior can thus be traced in part to these fundamentalist, neo-Victorian sensibilities. Indeed, Betty DeBerg insists that evangelicals' supposed increase in gender consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s reflected their fundamentalist inheritance.³ However, according to Margaret Bendroth, while some evangelicals “reasserted the traditional notions of male and female roles with even greater insistence,” others questioned “the very existence of seemingly arbitrary sexual roles.”⁴ Progressive evangelicals organized their own Women's Movement, promoting women's equality, particularly in the church and in the home. Feminists challenged both traditional and progressive evangelicals to define their position on the popularly termed “woman question.” As internal and external pressures converged on the issue of gender equality,

evangelicals resisted or reconciled feminist principles with their faith. Traditionalists published reactionary responses to the Women's Liberation Movement, but progressives renegotiated gender roles with liberation as the goal.

This chapter synthesizes the arguments evangelicals constructed in response to feminism. Despite being cast stereotypically as the guardians of traditional gender roles, even conservative evangelicals developed wide-ranging views that have offered women “a broad repertoire of choices and mutable scripts.”⁵ Judith Stacy and Susan E. Gerard argue that the gender ideologies of evangelical Christians in the United States have been “far more diverse, complex and contradictory than widely held stereotypes allow.”⁶ Indeed, the fieldwork of R. Marie Griffith and others illustrate how evangelicals have considered and enacted gender in surprising ways. In this textual analysis, I frame gender as an issue of debate to highlight how the stakes of this issue implicated a larger definitional debate within evangelicalism—what socially progressive positions could be legitimized under evangelical identity. Dichotomous positions on feminism coexisted within evangelicalism up to a point, beyond which claims of evangelical identity depended on adherence to the traditionalist view.

The gender debate proved to be a fault line within evangelicalism for two primary reasons. First, gender served an important ideological function in evangelical culture because gendered hierarchies instantiated a broader understanding that the world reflected divine hierarchy. Relationships in the family between parents and children, and husbands and wives, pointed to God's desire to create an ordered world, in which men and women played their respective roles. Second, opposing views on women's roles could not coexist easily in the same churches or Christian organizations because the

traditionalist view often limited women's agency within those bodies. For example, a feminist might not be allowed to serve in a leadership role in her church or her community might condemn her egalitarian marriage. These split reactions to feminism caused friction among evangelicals, leading to a plethora of literature on gender and organizational fracture. As evangelicals debated "the woman question," the rhetorical space of contest centered on the home.

I contend that evangelicals clashed over the home as the locus of women's place—the Christian home served as an exemplar of divine order or a site of divinely sanctioned gender parity with flexible boundaries. Those that upheld traditional views on gender constructed the home as microcosm of divine order. Since male headship reflected God's authority, this group of evangelicals catalogued ways for a woman to fulfill her purpose in the world through her role as a submissive wife and mother. The Women's Commission of the NAE and several popular books including Marabel Morgan's 1974 bestseller, *The Total Woman*, Elizabeth Elliot's, *Let Me be a Woman* (1976), and Helen Andelin's *Fascinating Womanhood* (1974) claimed that women should resist feminism and embrace their God-given distinction as women who thrived in the domestic sphere. The early 1970s also witnessed a small but growing movement called "biblical feminism," popularized by Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni in their 1974 book, *All We're Meant to Be*. Hardesty and other biblical feminists formed the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC), which provided organizational clout for Christian feminism. The caucus developed as a result of the 1973 Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, which acknowledged, "we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity."⁷ Thus, the EWC was created to raise consciousness about

feminism among Christians and demystify the notion that feminism and evangelicalism were somehow exclusive.

In this chapter, I explore the points of debate on the woman question by analyzing the texts described above. I focus primarily on women's voices because the archives show that women were the main participants in this debate. Arguments grounded in the "order" of creation forwarded idealized notions of femininity that could only be fulfilled in the home. Biblical feminists challenged those ideals through exegesis that unearthed liberation as a biblical principle to be lived in the home and beyond its boundaries. Through this approach, feminists hoped to secure their evangelical identities, but it ultimately threatened their claim to "evangelical" identity among more conservative evangelicals skeptical of their exegetical methods and appropriation of secular feminist ideals. First, I provide more context to this debate, illustrating the key points of contest among evangelicals in this particular moment. Second, I examine how traditionalists constructed the home as the site of ideal Christian womanhood. Third, I analyze how biblical feminists challenged that ideal through biblical hermeneutics and consciousness-raising. Finally, I synthesize this debate, showing how the traditionalist position became a marker of evangelical identity.

1974

1974 was a crucial year for evangelicals and the "woman question." The 1973 Evangelical Declaration of Social Concern had charged evangelicals with a mission to engage social movements such as Women's Liberation from a Christian perspective. Rather than looking directly to legal ramifications for gender inequality, however,

evangelicals looked inward to resources that could explain the proper place of gender in their lives. Thus, Christian women delved into the Bible, their church experiences, and their lives in (and out) of the home to examine what their gendered identities meant in accordance with their faith. They expressed their findings in books and through religious organizations.

According to *Evangelical Newsletter*, religious publishing houses in the 1970s were “inundated with books taking new looks at the ‘woman question.’”⁸ Indeed, in and around 1974 several popular Christian books were published on the topic of gender, or rather, womanhood: *Let Me Be a Woman*, *The Total Woman*, *All We’re Meant to Be*, *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband*, and a second edition of *Fascinating Womanhood*. All of these books espoused a theology of womanhood, and the first three serve as central texts for this chapter. Elizabeth Elliot, the author of *Let Me Be a Woman*, was “an icon of evangelical womanhood.”⁹ Hailed as the wife of martyred missionary, Jim Elliot, and a missionary in her own right, she published several books and later taught at Gordon Conwell Seminary.¹⁰ Elliot wrote *Let Me Be a Woman* as a letter to her daughter who was soon to be married. The book described the home as central to Christian womanhood and criticized feminism for elevating “personhood” over womanhood. Marabel Morgan, a more controversial figure than Elliot, wrote *The Total Woman* after losing a power struggle in her marriage. Realizing that she could only change herself, Morgan transformed into a “Total Woman,” a wife who actively submitted to her husband. Morgan’s popular “Total Woman” seminars, which taught women how to have successful marriages by embracing their domestic identities, and her public resistance to Women’s Liberation earned her a place on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1977. Unlike

Elliot and Morgan, the authors of *All We're Meant to Be*, Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni, advocated feminism from a Christian perspective. Hardesty earned her B.A. at Wheaton College and later taught at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois after working on the editorial staff of *Eternity* magazine, an evangelical publication. During Hardesty's tenure at *Eternity*, Scanzoni wrote several essays on gender for the magazine, which led to a lifelong friendship and professional partnership between the two women. They wrote the germinal book on an evangelical approach to women's liberation, *All We're Meant to Be*. In the years that followed the publication of their book, both women also emerged as key leaders in the Evangelical Women's Caucus.

Book reviews in Christian magazines often pitted *The Total Woman* against *All We're Meant to Be* because they offered such divergent frameworks for Christian womanhood. The latter suggested that women's liberation should be understood in terms of the gospel and the former provided a recipe for being a "Total Woman," i.e., a wife fulfilled in her God-ordained domestic sphere. Despite their differences, both books achieved success. *The Total Woman* fast-tracked to the National Religious Bestsellers list, selling 10 million copies while in print. *All We're Meant to Be* earned *Eternity* magazine's book of the year award and later landed a spot on *Christianity Today*'s list of the top 50 books that influenced evangelicals.¹¹ By looking briefly at contemporary reviews of both books, we can get a sense of the kinds of reactions evangelicals had to these oppositional gender ideologies.

For evangelicals, the biblical basis for each book's claims served as a primary criterion for evaluation. One review asked, "Each claims to be scriptural; can both be right?"¹² The implication for evangelical audiences was quite simply, no. Contesting

views on gender could not equally reflect God's word, and these books contained little to no positional overlap. Thus, it is no wonder 1974 was such a confusing year for women evangelicals. An *Evangelical Newsletter* review noted, "A battle of the sexes is emerging in evangelicalism and unfortunately St. Paul will be in the middle."¹³ Biblical hermeneutics were central to this debate and usually involved the ambivalent biblical passages on gender found in the letters of Paul.¹⁴ For some reviewers, both books neglected nuanced readings of these passages. According to a salty *Christianity Today* review, "*All We're Meant to Be* is a well-informed, scholarly, if not at times arbitrary analysis of multifaceted womanhood. The other book, *The Total Woman* (Revell) by Marabel Morgan, regrettably a best seller, takes some sound principles, bows them before the great god sex, and wraps them in pink baby-doll pajamas for delivery to the unsuspecting as an alternative to hard-core Women's Liberation."¹⁵ Some evangelicals took issue with *All We're Meant to Be*'s apparent efforts to lay feminism on top of Scripture. One review quipped that the subtitle, *A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*, was a misnomer since the book "seemed indeed quite unbiblical due to extensive use of secular references, opinions of theologians known to be more liberal than many evangelicals; secular opinion placed on 'equal footing' with the Holy Word."¹⁶ But, like the *Christianity Today* reviewer, many evangelical women resisted the sexualized constructions of femininity packaged in *The Total Woman*. An EWC guide urged Christian feminists to read *All We're Meant to Be* and then subversively "pick and infiltrate Total Woman seminars."¹⁷ These few reactions to the two major Christian publications on womanhood in 1974 reveal the fraught nature of the gender debate

among evangelicals. To analyze the points of contestation in more detail, I now analyze traditionalist texts that framed home as the ideal site to be a Christian woman.

The Ordered Home

In the 1960s and 1970s, traditionalists fixed “womanhood” to the domestic realm so that women would perform their role within the hierarchy of the family. The thrust of the traditionalist position was driven by the concept of divine order, which held that God created the world to function best when organized hierarchically. In the following section, I first describe how the traditionalist argument achieved coherence as one of “ultimate order” according to Kenneth Burke’s designation. Next, I analyze the home as the ideal site for womanhood. Finally, I examine the traditionalist hermeneutic of submission, the key theological guide to the marital relationship in the evangelical home.

Evangelicals constructed a world authored by God and ordered by hierarchies. With God as the ultimate King, earthly relationships within creation reflected His preference for authority and order. Relationships between governors and the governed, parents and children, and husbands and wives illustrated hierarchies of divine designation. This worldview cast normative understandings of gender that promoted male headship and female submission. Margaret Bendroth claims that as marriages were driven increasingly by personal fulfillment rather than social utility, evangelicals invoked “a divine ‘order of creation’ as the rationale for male dominance and female submission.”¹⁸ However, traditionalists faced the difficult task of making an argument about distinct gender roles without claiming the inferiority of women. By applying “divine order” as a

guiding principle for gender roles, traditionalists reconciled seemingly conflicting values, such as women's equality and male headship, by grounding them in an ultimate order.

Kenneth Burke's explanation of "ultimate order" best captures the persuasiveness of the traditionalist appeal among evangelicals scrambling to make sense of themselves as different, but equal, men and women. Burke argues that when voices within a group compete for authority, a "guiding idea" or "unitary principle" can organize those voices so that they resonate with one another.¹⁹ Like feminists, traditionalists constructed the home as a place of contest for power, but offered the principle of divine order as a way to arrange the family structure peaceably, "the members of the entire group being arranged developmentally with relation to one another."²⁰ Burke claims that in an ultimate ordering of things, "the terms so lead into one another that the completion of each order leads to the next."²¹ For traditionalists, a husband could only be his best with a wife who fulfilled her role within the order. One role was "a way into" another. Women could find value in such a hierarchy because they brought order to the home in a way that pointed to God's authority in the world. Being submissive didn't make wives inferior; it made them an essential part to the whole created order. Each role, husband and wife, were key to the workings of God's kingdom. This was the crux of the traditionalist argument. It acknowledged power struggles within the home, but drew from an ultimate order to reframe everyday relational tensions as opportunities for men to lead and women to submit, both illustrating God's design for the sexes. Here, I provide texture to the traditionalist argument by turning to the texts.

Divine Order

Traditionalists claimed that a woman could fulfill her purpose in the world by playing her part as a supportive wife and mother within the home. Elizabeth Elliot wrote that a Christian home, “is a world itself, a microcosm representing—as the church also represents—the hierarchy of the cosmos.”²² For Elliot, the home should bear witness to the divine order of creation, and she made womanhood an honorable calling subject to that hierarchy. She argued, “One thing that makes a marriage work is the acceptance of a divine order...I believe there is an order, established in the creation of the world, and I believe that much of the confusion that characterizes our society is the result of the violation of God’s design.”²³ Thus, when men and women properly enacted their roles, with women supporting and men leading, they participated in bringing order to their small “worlds,” i.e., their homes. Traditionalists sought to revive conservative, middle-class framings of the home as a “haven” and a “‘sacred symbol’ of traditional culture” in which women were the moral pillars of the home, acting on behalf of the family.²⁴

Arguments cast in the vein of divine order implied that homes with distinct roles for men and women functioned well. For example, Marabel Morgan argued, “God ordained man to be the head of the family, its president, and his wife to be the executive vice president.” This corporate analogy led to Morgan’s further claim: “Allowing your husband to be your family president is just good business.”²⁵ Helen Andelin, a Christian writer whose teachings in her book, *Fascinating Womanhood* were inspired by a series of books published in the 1920s, echoed Morgan’s analogy: “The father is the head, president, or spokesman of the family. He was appointed by God to this position, as clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures.”²⁶ No country or business could operate well

without a structure that empowered the leader through the support of its citizens or employees. Like any country or corporation with effective leadership, then, the home worked better when the husband assumed his leadership role with the wife in a support role. Elliot agreed, “It is the inequalities that make the home work.”²⁷ Harmony in the home could only be achieved through the acknowledgement and enactment of inequality, which pointed again to the divine intent behind different roles. To resent or resist one’s role dishonored God, inviting chaos and power struggle in the home. These arguments of functionality illustrated the kind of coherence traditionalists found in ultimate order. By restricting themselves to a less powerful role in the family, evangelical women understood their distinct role as part of a greater plan.

Sexual predeterminism undergirded many of these arguments so that only the man could play the leader role. In *Fascinating Womanhood*, a man’s role was described as “guide, protector, provider” and woman’s role as “wife, mother, homemaker.” These roles, Andelin argued, “are not merely a result of custom or tradition, but are of divine origin.”²⁸ Elliot cited Steven Goldberg’s book, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, to argue that patriarchy not only “has its foundation in theology, it is interesting to discover that it has also a valid biological foundation.”²⁹ This “scientific” reasoning allowed Elliot to refute the cultural foundations for gender roles and assert that gender roles were biologically innate because God ordained them.

Upon establishing the divinely sanctioned place of women as second in command in the home, Elliot, Andelin, and Morgan described the duties of this role in terms of homemaking, mothering, and sex. Perhaps anticipating the lackluster appeal of homemaking, these writers explained homemaking as a “career” in which a woman might

obtain varying degrees of success. Like any other job, to find value in homemaking, a woman must labor to improve her skills. Andelin described the ideal homemaker in this way: “She keeps a clean, orderly home, has well-behaved children, cooks delicious meals, and is successful in her overall career in the home.”³⁰ A career outside the home was discouraged or at least made secondary to the duties of homemaking. Morgan argued, “Only after you have met your spiritual needs, the needs of your husband and your children, should you think of your profession or the public. Civic clubs, parties, and social projects, yes, but only after order is restored at home.”³¹ Although women were not in a position to lead the family, they assumed responsibility for an organized home. According to Elliot, an ordered home signified an ordered spiritual life because it illustrated acceptance of one’s responsibility in a God-ordained framework. She stated, “The way you keep your house, the way you organize your time, the care you take in your personal appearance...speak loudly about what you believe...a disordered life speaks loudly of disorder in the soul.”³² Elliot advocated a kind of self-authorization via mimesis in which homemaking functioned as an “instance of mediation between interior life and the public sphere.”³³ Feminists, she argued, evaded responsibility by focusing on personal desires and neglecting the “whole vocation of womanhood,” such as the administrative duties of homemaking.³⁴ One might assume that the homes of feminists were as disordered as their internal priorities.

Mothering also contributed to vocational womanhood. Elliot argued, “every normal woman is equipped to be a mother...surely motherhood, in a deeper sense, is the essence of womanhood.”³⁵ Hardesty, a single woman, would later challenge this claim as flawed view of Christian womanhood that left little room for single women or married

women with no children. Yet, traditionalists forwarded the archetypal mother as the ideal fulfillment of the Christian woman; through motherhood, women could enact an influential role in their families and in the world. In a NAE Women's Commission bulletin, the lead article noted, "A woman who is following God's true design has more power than man-made law can give her. She has control over the rearing of her children—her own flesh and blood. She is the guiding force behind our coming generation."³⁶ Despite then, feminist strivings for equality through the Equal Rights Amendment, Christian women could rest in the knowledge they were shaping the future from their own kitchen tables. This sensibility echoed the ideology of the Republican Mother, a late 18th century American construction of an educated woman who performed her citizenship by raising virtuous children.³⁷ The Republican Mother of the 1970s served as a model of Christian citizenship, essential to maintaining American evangelical identity by maintaining the moral foundation of the home. Aside from church and school, the Women's Commission listed the home as one of "three areas that influence our children's lives the most." The bulletin asked, "Are you, as a mother, and/or a grandmother, teaching the love of God, creation, the Bible, patriotism, morality, honesty, and integrity? These subjects need to be taught first in the home by example, enforced in the Church, and expanded in the school."³⁸ By educating her children within the home, a mother claimed that space as her realm of influence in their lives.

Traditionalists also required women to foster their femininity as mark of sexual difference, reifying distinct gender roles. Elizabeth Elliot told her daughter, "The more womanly you are, the more manly your husband will want to be."³⁹ In a kind of identification through division, Elliot argued that men and women should fulfill their

discrete roles, providing complementarity within the home. She also refuted dismissive feminist attitudes toward femininity or beauty. Being viewed as a gender neutral “person” she argued, stripped her of her unique gifts and qualities as a woman. She claimed: “Our sexual differences are the terms of our life, and to obscure them in any way is to weaken the very fabric of life itself...Some women fondly imagine a new beginning of liberty, but it is in reality a new bondage, more bitter than anything they seek to be liberated from.”⁴⁰ By reframing women’s liberation as a paradoxical trap, she argued that only by embracing her sexual nature as a woman could she live freely. Attending to her physical attractiveness was a key part of that femininity.

Marabel Morgan pushed the boundaries of femininity from pretty wife to sex kitten. She urged women to greet their husbands at the door in costume to maintain their sexual interest.⁴¹ Morgan’s comments on this subject were by far the most controversial, but she was not alone in promoting such behavior. Darian Cooper, an evangelist and bestselling author of *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband* argued, “There are no sexual perversions when a wife is satisfying her husband’s sexual desires and needs.”⁴² These suggestions appear to cast the wife in the role as sexual object purely for the enjoyment of her husband. However, Morgan linked physical displays of attractiveness to power in marriage. She claimed, “When his need for an attractive and available wife is met, he’ll be so grateful that he will begin to meet your needs.”⁴³ Attractiveness and compliancy earned the wife favor in the home so that she too could fulfill her desires. But, the only well-placed desires for women were found within the home. For example, Morgan relayed a moment when she relinquished her hopes to redecorate a room in the home—a request that was continually denied by her husband. Instead, through flattery

and sexual prowess, she inspired his offer to redecorate. She claimed that any woman could also “have her husband absolutely adore her in just a few weeks time...she has the power.”⁴⁴ This power was paradoxically gained through submission.

Submission

As self-labeled “bible-believing Christians,” evangelicals depended on scripture to defend their claims about gender. They cited Old and New Testament passages to articulate their position, but male “headship” and female “submission” served as the major biblical concepts driving hierarchical theologies of gender. Submission became the primary way women were to relate to men, at least to their husbands and to men in the church. But, submission oriented broadly other earthly relationships between the Christian and government (Romans 13:1), God (James 4:7), and other Christians (Ephesians 5:21). These relationships reflected the hierarchical world God intended from the beginning, thus requiring acquiescence. The relationship between men and women, however, was the most basic and paramount to an ordered world. Traditionalists argued that Eve was originally created as a “helper” to Adam (Genesis 2:18), a point that Paul confirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:19: “Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” For traditionalists, this implied that God desired for men to have authority over women. The hierarchical relationship between husbands and wives was not a result of the Fall in Genesis, as progressives argued, but a matter of obedience to divine order.

The term submission as applied to modern marriages was derived from a few verses in the epistles that described the normative behaviors and attitudes of Christian wives. For example, 1 Peter 3:1-2 told wives, “submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by

the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”

Evangelicals interpreted this passage and others like it as a command that wives should surrender to the husband as the head of the family. By allowing her husband to lead her home, a woman honored God (Ephesians 5:22) and mirrored the relationship between Christ and the Church. Just as the husband was the head of the home, Christ was the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23). In the church, women were also ushered into submissive roles on the basis of verses like 1 Timothy 2:11, which claimed, “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.”⁴⁵ Evangelicals applied this passage to demonstrate the authority of men in the home and the church.

Women inspired by the Women’s Liberation Movement, however, neglected the call to submit. The NAE’s Women’s Commission analogized feminists to Eve saying, “Today’s woman seems to be following in Eve’s footsteps. Women are seeking through man-made laws to become equal to, or better than, her male counterpart... Today’s woman is fighting God, not satisfied to portray the role for which we were created.”⁴⁶ The Women’s Commission blamed such disobedience on the sinful inclinations of the heart and secular influences, which denied the divine designation of separate gender roles. Elizabeth Elliot refuted feminist arguments for equality because they demonstrated the same selfishness Eve acted upon in the Garden. If the biblical antimodel for a woman was Eve, Elliot constructed Mary, Jesus’ mother, as the ideal model.⁴⁷ Elliot acknowledged that upon being called by God to be a mother, Mary “might have hesitated because she didn’t want to go through life being known only as somebody’s mother. She might have had her own dreams of fulfillment.” But instead of focusing on her own desires, “she embraced at once the will of God...for it is the nature of the woman to

submit.”⁴⁸ Thus, Christian women were to imitate Mary’s humble comportment, rather than Eve’s rebellious attitude. Elliot pointed to divine (natural) order as the primary impetus for submission, and she attacked feminist claims of personal agency as misguided or prideful, especially as an effort to avoid mothering. Again, Elliot proposed this paradox: only through submission could a woman obtain power because she would fulfill her true purpose. Elliot stated, “It is not a weakness for the boat to submit to the rules of sailing. That submission is her strength. It is the rules that enable the boat to utilize her full strength.”⁴⁹ When a woman fulfilled her God-given role in submission, marital peace and functionality in the home were restored because men and women could perform to their full potential. The arrangement of roles in the home developed in concert with another, illustrating the cohesive power of ultimate order.

Morgan elevated submission even further. She argued, “It is only when a woman surrenders her life to her husband, reveres and worships him, and is willing to serve him, that she becomes really beautiful to him.” She could then reflect “the glory of femininity.”⁵⁰ Morgan amplified gender stratification, linking male headship to divine authority as if a man in his home wielded the same power as the Lord in heaven. One book review accused Morgan of implicating wives in “the worst kind of self-sacrificial idolatry.”⁵¹ Her emphasis on submission seemed to make the husband an idol, dethroning God as the focus of worship. The spectacle Morgan described was certainly of a different ilk than that of Elliot, but both required female submission. Indeed, the ideal woman constructed by Morgan, Elliot, and Andelin restricted women to the domestic sphere to fulfill their duties of homemaking, mothering, and sex within the hierarchy of the family.

Liberation

For Christian feminists, the home functioned normatively as a place to enact gender equality. Evangelicals promoted gender equality by advocating mutual submission in marriage and by assigning personhood, rather than womanhood, ultimate status. Indeed, these values asserted women's place in and beyond the home. Women's liberation was certainly a rallying cry for secular feminists, but a growing movement of biblical feminists claimed liberation as a biblical principle that expressed God's design for equal partnership between men and women. Two primary source texts illustrate the challenges and motivations of evangelical feminists: *All We're Meant to Be* and the archives of the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC).

All We're Meant to Be was as essential to Christian feminism as *The Feminine Mystique* was to the women's movement. Margaret Bendroth calls *All We're Meant to Be* a "groundbreaking exposition of evangelical feminism."⁵² Indeed, it should be read as a theological blueprint to the Evangelical Women's Caucus, the formative site for evangelical feminism in the 1970s. The EWC first met in 1973 during the famous Thanksgiving conference held by Evangelicals for Social Action. The EWC envisioned its role as "temporary, until our goal of mutual submission and discipleship among Christian men and women is reached."⁵³ In its early years, EWC members considered how they might distinguish their group from secular feminist groups. One member suggested that the caucus should achieve distinction by, "changing the consciousness of the church and on working for change in the institutional evangelical community."⁵⁴ Consciousness-raising among evangelicals remained a central focus of EWC into the early 1980s, as the Christian Right grew increasingly antagonistic towards feminism. The

EWC insisted that feminism and evangelicalism were mutually inclusive, and the caucus sought to explicate the resonances between the two in order to reach evangelical audiences. Despite resistance among conservative evangelicals, the EWC continued to target evangelicals instead of associating itself with more liberal mainline churches. One caucus member noted, “We maintain ties with evangelical churches and para-church organizations, encouraging commitment to the evangelical tradition, while seeking to witness to the feminist implications within that tradition.”⁵⁵ EWC members viewed themselves as missionaries of the gospel of biblical feminism and their would-be converts were traditionalist-minded evangelicals. To explore their evangelistic strategy in more detail, I now turn to the concept of mutual submission.

Mutual Submission

As evangelical feminists sought converts, they faced opposition from traditionalist interpretations of female submission and male headship outlined in the New Testament. No well-respecting evangelical would easily embrace feminism without sound biblical evidence to refute or re-imagine those difficult Pauline passages. Thus, biblical feminists re-envisioned feminism through the language of “mutual submission,” which extended the concept of submission to men and women, based on Ephesians 5:21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” a verse that preceded the call for wives to submit to their husbands. By interpreting submission in this way, feminists refuted the hierarchical worldview of traditionalists and the entire divine order paradigm. To dismantle the principle of divine order so fundamental to conservative American evangelicalism, Christian feminists knew they had to depend on exacting biblical hermeneutics to

maintain their evangelical identity. From Genesis to Paul, they applied a critical lens to traditional interpretations of scripture to advocate for mutual submission.

The EWC's statement of faith read: "We believe that God created humankind, female and male, in the divine image, for fellowship with God and one another. We further believe that because of human sinful disobedience, the right relationship with God was shattered, with a consequent disruption of all other relationships."⁵⁶ An echo of Genesis 1:27, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," the statement exchanged "man" for "humankind" and "male and female" with "female and male." By replacing "man" with a gender-neutral term and switching the order of "male and female," the writers argued that the order in which God created man and woman had no bearing on present-day gender roles. The statement reframed the creation story to highlight the preeminence of personhood—both sexes were created equally in the divine image. The impulse to construct distinct roles for men and women upended God's original plan for equality between the sexes. Just like traditionalists, progressives made a genetic or pre-ordained argument about God's intent, but theirs was not rooted in divine order. The feminist position focused on a return to a kind of pre-Fallen equality between men and women. Thus, the EWC outlined the following statement of purpose: "Present God's teaching on female-male equality to the whole body of Christ's church" and "call both men and women to mutual submission and active discipleship."⁵⁷ The EWC believed that feminists could redeem the broken relationship between men and women through biblical re-education and the practice of gender-neutral submission.

Hardesty and Scanzoni also addressed the genesis of gender inequality and the call for mutual submission. Again, they sought to gain ground by establishing their view as the normative point of origin for gender relations. They observed, “What is usually thought of as a divinely ordained division of labor occurred only after sin entered the world.”⁵⁸ In concurrence with the EWC, Hardesty and Scanzoni described the gender distinctions between men and women exhibited in Genesis 3 as a result of sin. By drawing out this argument of divine origin, Hardesty and Scanzoni applied the same line of reasoning as their opponents —God’s intent for creation demonstrated the ideal—but they interpreted that original state as gender equality before the curse of sin. They argued, “Man’s rule over woman is not an imperative order of creation but rather the element of disorder that disturbs the original peace of creation.”⁵⁹ The disordered relationship that followed should be resisted, not tacitly and certainly not enthusiastically, performed.

To refute “divine order” arguments cast in defense of patriarchy as a biblical principle Hardesty and Scanzoni also examined the meanings of headship and submission. To argue for mutual submission, they claimed “headship” was not a word for authority that demanded submission, but rather one meaning “source,” taken from the Greek word *kephale*. Thus, male headship in Ephesians 5:23-24 should be read as a call for husbands to emulate Christ’s example of “self-giving oneness with his body, the church.”⁶⁰ The husband should demonstrate self-giving by sacrificing his needs and desires for his wife, just as she should give herself to him in submission. Hardesty and Scanzoni neglected to clarify whether these were parallel or equal concepts. But, they understood unity as the overarching principle. In other words, marriage should be rooted in partnership, not patriarchy. Through exegesis (with numerous endnotes) of sticky

biblical passages, biblical feminists enacted a high view of Scripture that provided a way for them to retain their evangelical identity. But, they also constructed a doctrine of Christian feminism in a community of women committed to the progressive values of their secular counterparts.

Christian Feminism

Christian feminists defined their faith-based women's movement through the primacy of personhood. By focusing on personhood, feminists rejected traditionalist arguments of divine order that enshrined womanhood as their core identity. Thus, they refashioned Elliot's plea, "Let me be a woman," to "I am a person." Within the EWC community, feminists formulated a theology of gender that asserted women as co-equal to men and image-bearers of God. They imagined the home as a site of gender parity out of which women were free to choose their vocations.

Christian feminists resisted hierarchical constructions of the home. For example, Hardesty argued, "I am first of all a person and not a separate category labeled 'woman' and limited by some God-ordained 'place.' I have a new vision of what the religious life, the Christian life, is about. It is not finding some small pigeon-hole labeled by gender and conforming myself to it. Not trying to make myself a Total Woman and finding my place in the chain of command."⁶¹ The male/female duality in traditionalist texts left little room for single women, a group marginalized in the debate over the "woman question." If women could only be defined in opposition to men, fulfilling their purpose in a home with male headship, single women were left placeless. Hardesty believed that women, single or married, should understand their role within the broader framework of society since the home lacked adequate space to necessarily fulfill one's vocation. Some women

found this refreshing. One woman describing herself as “a single woman who is not only a Christian but also a businesswoman,” wrote to EWC exclaiming, “I am absolutely delighted to have been introduced to your group, since I have been having trouble with possessing characteristics that do not seem to fit into either the Christian community or today’s society.”⁶² Even though many evangelical women saw practical value in this view, their conservative backgrounds made it difficult to reconcile Christianity with feminism. Thus, the EWC was tasked with showing how being a Christian feminist could constitute a mutually inclusive identity.

The EWC encouraged women to question “womanhood” as the primary facet of their Christian identity by examining “a new animal”—Christian feminism. Breaking down the separate terms: (1) Christian as “someone who is committed to serving and loving Jesus Christ” and; (2) Feminist as “someone who is discontented with the current roles and options open to women, and who would like to change them,” the EWC illuminated the commonalities between the two. For example, both Christians and feminists “feel they are in possession of some truths or absolutes, are in radical conflict with their culture (at its roots), and have a sense of mission to the world.” The missions of evangelism and feminist consciousness-raising were not so different in that they both sought to express truth, especially to those living in opposition to the gospel. Thus, EWC advocates argued, “it is not surprising that the same person would become both a Christian and a feminist...You must become both.”⁶³ Both Christianity and feminism required conversion and practice. Christian feminism emerged as a kind of new doctrine that urged transformational living—a concept that would have been familiar to

evangelical Christians. Carefully, the EWC encouraged women to expand their agency in the home, in church, and in society.

The EWC self-consciously subverted the dominant family structure and social institutions like secular feminists. For example, the caucus issued a special issue of EWC Update in 1982 entitled, “The Family Issue: How Should Biblical Feminists Answer Critics?” The lead article acknowledged, “Certainly in affirming women as coequal with men, as partners in creation and in redemption, we are challenging those patterns and institutions of society—including the structure of the family—that depict males as active and dominant, and females as passive and subordinate.”⁶⁴ This assertion confronted traditionalists who defended male leadership on the basis of divine order. Here, evangelical feminists expressed less concern about the divine origin of gender roles than insisting on gender equality despite tradition. They also argued that equality within the home would better support the family. Since traditionalists like Morgan and Elliot used the functionality of hierarchical marital relationships as evidence in favor of male headship, Hardesty and Scanzoni sought to rebut those arguments through alternative metaphors. They summarized traditionalist arguments in this way: “The husband is to be the head of the home, and if the wife wants to be equal—well, that would mean there would be two heads. And doesn’t everyone know that a two-headed monstrosity could never function well?”⁶⁵ Of the many metaphors to illustrate the utility of hierarchy, Hardesty and Scanzoni attacked the government metaphor, which went something like this: A marriage can no more have two voices of authority than a country could choose two presidents equal in power. They argued that the ancient Roman Republic had exactly this kind of leadership for the purpose of checks and balances.⁶⁶ Additionally, at a July

1983 EWC conference attended by over 1,000 women, Gracia Grendall argued, “Women should not have to do all the work to sustain the family. The family must be supported, not just sentimentalized about. If families are important, childcare should be a priority. If homemaking is important, it must receive economic recognition.”⁶⁷ Again, biblical feminists used the premises of traditionalists, i.e., homemaking was central to a woman’s career, in the interest of feminism. They attacked the romanticism and impracticality of traditionalists who “sentimentalized” a complementary relationship between men and women, but in reality left women with all the housework. Due to changing economic conditions, by the early 1980s women in the workplace became commonplace, and traditionalists faced a more difficult task of convincing women of their homemaking role in addition to full time work. As proponents for revising traditional gender patterns became less counter-culture, evangelicals had difficulty uniting around a firm stance on gender roles in the home. Likewise, evangelical churches struggled as Christian feminists challenged male headship within the church.

One way in which biblical feminists urged greater participation of women in the church was by pointing to the alternative: wasting the Church’s gifts by excluding highly gifted women. This was especially pronounced in light of a Christian tradition that encouraged women and men to serve the church in whatever area the Spirit gifted them. Hardesty and Scanzoni argued, “Despite the varied ministries which women exercised in the early church, women have been systematically excluded from the ordained ministry and the power structure of the church.”⁶⁸ As a graduate of Gordon Theological Seminary, Hardesty disputed these restrictions. “Now,” she argued, “I find my only ‘calling’ can be a wide selection of Sunday School teacher, Bible School teacher, President of the

Women's Missionary Society or Deaconess (which means I wash communion cups). Is this fair? Is this liberated?" The EWC understood that increased visibility of women in more public roles in church would challenge gender inequality. An EWC guide suggested that local chapter members "form a committee to analyze women's roles in your church and to work for changes in hiring, church elections, serving communion, kitchen work, ushering, etc. Report regularly to the governing bodies of your church."⁶⁹ Certainly American evangelicals in the 1970s realized that women were capable of participating in its governing bodies. But, according to the Elizabeth Elliot, women's capability was not sufficient reason for including them in leadership roles. More than competence, she argued, the question of women's leadership in the church "has to do with things vastly more fundamental and permanent, and the meaning of womanhood is one of these things."⁷⁰ For traditionalists, women's talents were still subservient to the command for order. Thus, as biblical feminists faced resistance to their cause in their churches, they turned their attention to more public inequalities.

As evangelical feminists organized in the ranks of the EWC, they promoted a variety of political causes, but none more outstanding than the Equal Rights Amendment. Even more than the EWC's perspective on women in church, its favorable position on the ERA took the woman question well outside of the home. By 1980, passing the ERA emerged as a goal within the EWC's statement of purpose.⁷¹ The EWC created a strategy for reaching Christians on this issue, but it marked one of the first times the EWC expressed significant doubt that evangelicals would support its work. The strategy consisted of three elements: "(1) to identify and activate those more progressive religious denominations which are willing to support the ERA with both funding and personnel;

(2) to identify those evangelical churches which might possibly support the ERA if, through education, the issue was properly understood, and (3) to identify and attempt to neutralize, through education, those conservative fundamentalist denominations which actively oppose the ERA.”⁷² Although the second point shows that EWC members felt that a majority of evangelicals lacked understanding of the issues, Phyllis Schlafly and other Christian conservative activists led a more effective charge against the ERA, arguing that it would negatively affect housewives. The NAE Women’s Commission also urged its members to rescind ERA legislation in their states because it would threaten working women facing difficult physical demands.⁷³ Despite immense opposition to the ERA from outside the EWC, many EWC members felt that their support of the ERA did not go far enough to express their feminist principles. The EWC faced its own breaking point—like secular feminist organizations, the EWC grappled with issues particular to poor women, women of color, and lesbians.

In 1984, the EWC elicited responses from its members about passing resolutions in addition to the ERA involving racism, militarism, abortion, and homosexuality. Although almost all members supported the ERA as a special resolution, the organization split over passing additional resolutions. Many members cited abortion or homosexuality as particularly divisive issues that would prevent their original mission to conservative Christians. One member stated, “I will be unable to use EWC to build bridges or educate conservative women on Biblical feminism if we are identified by these issues.”⁷⁴ Members who voted against additional resolutions seemed particularly concerned that by expanding their activism, they would no longer reach their target audience of

evangelicals because their own evangelical identity would be questioned. One member expressed this sentiment:

Our own personal pilgrimage is rapidly leading us so very far ahead of the constituency to which we seek to minister (conservative Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and Charismatics) that (a) they cannot hear what we are saying because they can identify almost nothing of what we say with that they are used to hearing, and (b) our credibility as Evangelicals is seriously damaged because we are becoming identified with more and more causes they regard as heretical, while we actively support almost nothing in which they are interested...At least in New England, we are in danger of becoming a group whose feminism is primary and whose interest in faith is secondary, and not always Evangelical, at that. It is exciting to attract large numbers, but I strongly feel that our credibility as an Evangelical organization depends on not filling up our ranks with people who may be genuinely religious feminists, but are not Evangelicals.⁷⁵

This member was clearly concerned with the purity of their cause and the risk of losing her evangelical identity. More progressive members, however, saw other issues as logical extensions of biblical feminism. One member asked, “How can EWCI take a theological and political position on the ERA and not on other issues/subjects/positions? Does not equal rights for women include peace with justice issues, election issues, sexuality issues, racism issues, poverty issues, violence issues and pornography issues?”⁷⁶ Another drew from her understanding of evangelical identity to argue for liberation in all aspects of life: “We can only be truly evangelical as we actively live the Good News that Jesus has redeemed the world. That means ‘freeing the captives...feeding the hungry, clothing the

naked, giving shelter to the homeless.’ As a Christian who is committed to social justice as part of the New Covenant—‘to love one another as I love you’ in practice, taking a stand on ERA, peace, political involvement, racism, poverty, sexism/heterosexism, violence and pornography is simply part of being faithful and following Christ.”⁷⁷ As a result of this debate, several prominent members left and the EWC later became the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women’s Caucus (1990) to reflect a broad range of traditions within the organization. The EEWC no longer invested in educating and converting evangelical traditionalists.

A Battle of the Sexes: A Battle for Evangelicalism

Despite broad support for the traditionalist approach to gender, a minority of progressive evangelicals advocated gender equality in and beyond the home. In the early to mid-1970s, both camps showed strong support, but by observing the status of this debate by the early 1980s we should conclude that traditionalists won for two primary reasons. First, traditionalists grounded their arguments in an ultimate order that overcame inter-gender conflict in the interest of a transcendent divine order. Second, progressives faced a problem of authority and cohesion within their ranks when their focus expanded beyond feminism.

The concept of divine order, essential to the evangelical worldview, organized the world into distinct parts. The home became a microcosmic, even exemplary site that illustrated the necessity and functionality of divine order. Divine order thus served as the unitary principle driving a Burkean argument of ultimate order wherein each member of the family fulfilled a purpose set apart for them by God. Traditionalists sequenced the

roles of men and women so that as women performed their tasks within the home, men could then lead without conflict. As Burke describes, one role or term could so “lead into one another that the completion of each order leads to the next.”⁷⁸ As women submitted, men could fulfill their role as head of the home. The universal logic of divine order was so ingrained in the evangelical worldview that the conflicting motives women may have had about taking on a submissive role were overcome by their divine calling. When Burke describes the effect of ultimate order on motives, he acknowledges that alternative motives exist alongside the ultimate but because the ultimate is so encompassing, other motives might simply be reordered within the series.⁷⁹ That is, evangelical women certainly sought ways to maintain their agency and find meaning in their labor, but these desires could be fulfilled within the ultimate order. Traditionalists constructed a space for women in the home that appeared influential and meaningful, not only for their immediate families, but for the world. They bore witness to a kind of “mystical” quality about creation—it worked better when people acted in ways that God created them to. The picture for women and families was one of peace and fulfillment.

The cohesiveness of the traditionalist position created an uphill battle for women participating in the Christian feminist movement. *All We're Meant to Be* and the EWC made strong headway, but their biblical exegesis presented a problem of authority for many evangelicals. In 1974, a NOW member argued, “the last great bastion of sexism in this country took a heavy blow this fall” with the publication of *All We're Meant to Be*. She recognized Hardesty and Scanzoni as feminists arguing “from within” the “‘born-again’ school,” which gave them “an ‘in’ with many groups and households which are closed against ‘women’s libbers.’”⁸⁰ Despite this hopeful pronouncement, Hardesty and

Scanzoni faced criticism for their exegetical methods—a reason many in the “born again” school marginalized the book. For example, a faculty member at Capital Bible Seminary noted that “Such remarkable, modern, ‘let’s get with it’ conclusions are reached by the tools of cultural change-chucking out the old-foggy ideas—and of needle-in-the-haystack exegesis—i.e., grasping any possible meaning whether by research or the creative authority of the imagination.”⁸¹ Even Virginia Mollenkott, a liberal member of EWC, agreed. She claimed, “Hardesty and Scanzoni hold such a high view of Scripture that they are reluctant to admit that sexism rears its ugly head anywhere within the pages of Holy Writ. They manage to find Feminist ways of interpreting every New Testament passage concerning women, some of which require a good deal of exegetical gymnastics, until sometimes one wishes that they would just admit that at times the Apostle Paul’s rabbinical training blinded him to the liberating implications of his own vision of Christian solidarity.”⁸² Yet, without those “exegetical gymnastics” Hardesty and Scanzoni would likely never have reached their target audience: evangelicals who also held a high view of Scripture. Hardesty fought her critics, resentful that her methods were held to a different standard: “Biblical scholars usually have a rather complex and subtle system of hermeneutical principles by which they derive 99% of their biblical theology,” she argued. “But if they bother with another 1% devoted to the ‘woman problem,’ they suddenly become as literal prooftexters as any Schofield –Bible fundamentalist.”⁸³

At the root of this clash was a problem of authority. Both traditionalist and progressive evangelicals claimed the authority of the Bible, but neither could agree on what it said about gender.⁸⁴ Some traditionalists even claimed the EWC was responsible for leading “hundreds of women...astray by false teachings from teachers who probably

have no idea how unbiblical and potentially destructive for the Church their male-female egalitarian teaching is.” The “great tragedy,” this evangelical noted, was that these women “seemed to not have had enough Biblical discernment that what 2000 years of Church history would consider outright, unbiblical heresy, was being taught, and of all things, taught in the name of Christ and Biblicalness. God have mercy on 20th century evangelism!”⁸⁵ Evangelicals who had been trained in traditionalist-minded interpretations of gender in Scripture could not reconcile “feminist” readings as consistent with evangelicalism. A letter to the editor in *Christianity Today* argued, “It is tragic that the EWC has adopted the name ‘evangelical.’ In my opinion there is a huge chasm between this caucus and evangelical biblical Christianity. These people must realize that a woman becomes a woman not by joining some pseudo-Christian feminist group but by becoming what God wants her to be...If the women of the Evangelical Women’s Caucus wish to harangue us some more about women’s rights that is their privilege, but they should do it under a banner other than that of evangelical Christianity.”⁸⁶

The EWC recognized its problem of authority, which is why Hardesty, Scanzoni, and other feminists drew primarily from scripture to make their arguments, but with marginal success. One chapter of the caucus proposed that they needed “an authoritative pulpit from which to present Biblical Feminism frequently and consistently.” Thus, it created a radio-programming plan that would “Establish ourselves as true Christians—that we believe in a personal relationship with Christ and we hold to the basic evangelical beliefs such as justification by faith.” Then, they would provide: “exegesis of the misinterpreted difficult passages about women, much historical background, practical examples in home and society.”⁸⁷ The reference to “true Christians” illustrates the

exigency of evangelical feminism—how to be feminists and still count as evangelicals. The EWC’s statement of faith claimed: “We affirm a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe that under Christ’s headship and through the work of the Holy Spirit we are freed to exercise our gifts responsibly in our churches, homes and society.”⁸⁸ At every turn, the EWC sought in its early days to reassert its evangelical voice amid constant challenges to its authenticity. But many EWC members became fed up with what they understood as pandering to conservatives.

Like secular feminist organizations, which struggled internally with minority constituencies, the EWC faced challenges within its own ranks that made it even more difficult to “witness” to conservative evangelicals.⁸⁹ In the mid-1980s, the EWC split on a resolution that “recognized the presence of the Lesbian minority in EWCI and took a firm stand in favor of civil rights protection for homosexual persons.”⁹⁰ Maintaining ties to more conservative evangelical churches or raising consciousness among those groups became secondary to the aims of solidarity with minority caucus members. The most progressive evangelical feminists lost faith in convincing “evangelicals” that feminism was a Christian pursuit. Two decades after the founding of EWC and the publication of *All We’re Meant to Be*, a group of conservative evangelicals responded to evangelical feminism with the book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Biblical Feminism*, which was awarded the book of the year by *Christianity Today* in 1993.⁹¹ Though Christian feminists demonstrated strong resistance to patriarchy, it continued to dominate the woman question.⁹²

¹ Margaret L. Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role' in American Evangelicalism, 1930-1980," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 122.

² Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 183.

³ Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 106.

⁴ Bendroth, 122-23.

⁵ R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 179. R. Marie Griffith analyzes the mutability of women's roles among Pentecostals.

⁶ Judith Stacy and Susan E. Gerard, "'We are not Doormats': The Influence of Feminism on Contemporary Evangelicals in the United States," in *Uncertain Terms: Negotiating Gender in American Culture*, ed. Faye Ginsburg and Anna L. Tsing (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1990), 99.

⁷ A Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, Nov. 25, 1973, Collection 37, Box 1, Folder: Thanksgiving Workshop, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton, IL.

⁸ Newspaper clipping, Cheryl Forbes, *Evangelical Newsletter*, August 30, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 9, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.

⁹ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, 163.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1957). The book is Elliot's account of her husband's death as one of five missionaries killed while on a mission to reach the Auca Indians of Ecuador. Elizabeth Elliot later worked among the Huaorani, the tribe whose members killed Jim Elliot.

¹¹ Newspaper clipping, "Book of the Year, Topic of the Year," *Christianity Today*, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 14, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY. See also "The Top 50 Books that Have Shaped Evangelicals," *Christianity Today*, Oct 6, 2006,

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/october/23.51.html>

¹² Newspaper clipping, Cheryl Forbes, *Evangelical Newsletter*, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 9, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.

¹³ Newspaper clipping, William J. Peterson, "New Challenges in the Wings," *Evangelical Newsletter*, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 9, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.

¹⁴ Paul is credited with writing 1 Timothy 2:11-13; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Galatians 3:28. These passages present controversial and potentially contradictory views of women.

¹⁵ Carol Prester McFadden, "Significant Books of '74," *Christianity Today*, March 14, 1974, 19.

¹⁶ Fred Kerr, "All We're Meant to Be," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 29, no. 1 (1977): 45.

¹⁷ Anne Eggbroten, "Methods of Consciousness-Raising in Your Local Church," p. 1, Series 4G, Box 1, Folder 2, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.

¹⁸ Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role'," 130.

¹⁹ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 187

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 189

²² Elizabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), 122.

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- ²³ Ibid., 110
- ²⁴ Bonnie J. Dow, "The 'Womanhood' Rationale in the Woman Suffrage Rhetoric of Francis E. Willard," *The Southern Communication Journal* 56, no. 4 (1991): 300; Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 53.
- ²⁵ Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman* (Old Tappan, NJ: Flemington H. Revell Company, 1973), 70.
- ²⁶ Helen Andelin, *Fascinating Womanhood* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1965, 2007), 135.
- ²⁷ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 121.
- ²⁸ Andelin, *Fascinating Womanhood*, 124.
- ²⁹ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 135. Elliot's conclusion was probably based in Goldberg's claim that male dominance was driven by testosterone, and thus men and women were physiologically different. Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York: William and Morrow Company, 1973), 131
- ³⁰ Andelin, *Fascinating Womanhood*, 286.
- ³¹ Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 184.
- ³² Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 36-37.
- ³³ Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 152.
- ³⁴ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 45.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 53
- ³⁶ Majilis L. Parke, "Women's Fellowship Summer Bulletin – 1978," p. 1, Series 2, SubSeries 9, Box 138, Folder: Evangelical Women's Fellowship, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collection, Wheaton, IL.
- ³⁷ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York, NY: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 57.
- ³⁸ Majilis L. Parke, "Women's Fellowship Summer Bulletin – 1978," p. 2.
- ³⁹ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 149.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 83.
- ⁴¹ Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 95.
- ⁴² Darien Cooper, *You Can be the Wife of a Happy Husband* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1974), 145.
- ⁴³ Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 99.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 27.
- ⁴⁵ See also Ephesians 5:22-23.
- ⁴⁶ Majilis L. Parke, "Women's Fellowship Summer Bulletin – 1978," p. 1.
- ⁴⁷ Chaim Perelman, *The Realm of Rhetoric*, trans. William Kluback (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) 110-113. Perelman discusses arguments of model and antimodel.
- ⁴⁸ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 55.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 93-94.
- ⁵⁰ Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 80.
- ⁵¹ Virginia Mollenkott, "The Total Submission Woman," *Christian Herald*, November 1975, 26.
- ⁵² Bendroth, "The Search for 'Women's Role'," 133.
- ⁵³ "Guidelines for Chapter Development," p. 8, Series 1B, Folder: 1976-77 Chapter development Committee, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁵⁴ Elizabeth Nordquist to Chapter Development Committee, June 14, 1976, p. 1, Series 1B, Folder: 1976-77 Chapter Development Committee, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.

- ⁵⁵ Florence Brown to "Council Sisters," Oct. 21, 1981, pg. 3, Series 1B, Folder: 940 1981: Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁵⁶ National Evangelical Women's Caucus By-Laws, June 17, 1978, p. 1, Series 1B, Folder: 1978-1980 Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), 109.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, 35.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.
- ⁶¹ Nancy Hardesty, Northwestern Speech, April 13, 1975, p. 2, Series 7, Box 1, Folder 5, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁶² Barbara Gifford to EWC, Dec. 31, 1979, Series 1B, Folder: 1978-1980: Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁶³ Anne Eggebroten, "Christianity and Feminism," p. 1, Series 4G, Folder 2: SW Chapter-Reports/Resources 1967-77, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁶⁴ Diane Marshall, "Problem's Deeper than One Might Think," *EWC Update* 6 no. 2 (1982): 1.
- ⁶⁵ Scanzoni and Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, 91.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. Metaphors on both sides of the aisle arbitrarily attempted to illustrate the utility of equal partnership or male headship; they broke apart easily. For instance, one metaphorical dyad compared two people riding a horse (requiring one person as guide) to two people riding side by side in a carriage who could make decisions together.
- ⁶⁷ Seattle Meeting Report, Series 1B, Folder: 1983 Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁶⁸ Scanzoni and Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, 169.
- ⁶⁹ Anne Eggebroten, "Methods of Consciousness-Raising in Your Local Church," p. 1.
- ⁷⁰ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman*, 40.
- ⁷¹ Statement of Purpose (from By-Laws adopted June 17, 1978), p. 2, Series 1A, Folder: EEWC By-Laws, Statement of Purpose 1980, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁷² ERA Ratification Proposal, p. 1, Series 1B, Folder 943: 1983 Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁷³ "Women's Fellowship Summer Bulletin – 1978," p. 2, Series 2, SubSeries 9, Box 138, Folder: Evangelical Women's Fellowship, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collection, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁷⁴ "Results of EWCI Membership Poll," 1984, p. 4, Series 1B, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 8.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 10.
- ⁷⁸ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 189.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.

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- ⁸⁰ Newspaper clipping, Anne Eggebroten, "Book Review," *NOW Newsletter*, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 8, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁸¹ Newspaper clipping, John H. Mulholland, *Capital Bible Seminary Newsletter*, 1974, Series 2, Box 1, Folder 13, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Nancy A. Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁸² Virginia Mollenkott, "All We're Meant to Be," *Cross Currents* (Winter 1975): 517-518.
- ⁸³ Nancy Hardesty, Speech at Gordon-Conwell, April 5, 1974, p. 1, Series 7, Box 1, Folder 4, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship: Nancy Hardesty Papers, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁸⁴ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, 3-4. As Worthen argues, the problem of authority plagued midcentury American Evangelicalism generally.
- ⁸⁵ Donna Grimstead to Thomas McCrossan, p. 1, Series 1B, Folder: Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁸⁶ J. Scott Susong, "Letter to Editor," *Christianity Today*, September 22, 1978, 11.
- ⁸⁷ Portland Chapter's Radio Proposal, n.d., p. 1, Series 1B, Folder: Executive Council, The Archive of Women in Theological Scholarship, Evangelical Ecumenical Women's Caucus, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- ⁸⁸ National Evangelical Women's Caucus By-Laws, June 17, 1978, p. 1.
- ⁸⁹ Betty Friedan "identified lesbians as one of feminism's foremost internal threats, its 'lavender menace'." Kristan Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman: Containment Rhetorics of Second Wave Radical/Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 32, no. 3 (2009): 263
- ⁹⁰ Beth Spring, "Gay Rights Resolution Divides Membership of Evangelical Women's Caucus," *Christianity Today*, Oct. 3, 1986, 40.
- ⁹¹ Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 17.
- ⁹² The work of Hardesty, Scanzoni, and the EWC now appears divorced from more contemporary evangelical feminists like Rachel Held Evans who seem more invested in reacting to traditionalists in their moment. The EEWC continues to conference around issues related to women in the church, but such conferences exhibit little overlap with the kind of churches the EWC originally hoped to bring into their ranks.

CHAPTER 4

STEWARDING CHRISTIAN AMERICA: WHITENESS AND PROSPERITY

Edward M. Goulburn, a 19th century English churchman wrote, “Each one of us has a stewardship somewhere in the great social system.”¹ Goulburn described stewardship as the Christian’s duty to “sanctify the secular” in everyday life.² According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a stewardship is a position appointed by a higher power to direct or arrange. Its ecclesiastical use connotes the responsibility of the steward for resources given to him or her by God.³ More than a century after Goulburn published his thoughts on the role of stewardship in the Christian life, American evangelicals rhetorically activated this concept to define their role in the nation. They neglected the explicit use of the term, but they constructed themselves as the nation’s stewards by assuming the burden of American exceptionalism. That is, they appropriated the myth of America’s Christian origins to narrate a trajectory that required Christian faith of its citizens to insure the nation’s exceptional status. Evangelical leaders and institutions embraced their role as stewards of America, but conserving an “ideal” Christian past and the “American way” implicated evangelicals in a fraught perpetuation of systems that largely benefited whites.

In this chapter, I examine how evangelicals propagated and contested the myth of “Christian America,” examining the implications of that myth on race and poverty. I argue that as mainstream evangelicals positioned themselves as stewards of America, they equated evangelicalism with a kind of white American patriotism that alienated African Americans. Black evangelicals rejected this mythic construct; they envisioned a different kind of evangelicalism that depended on knowing the black past as a way to

orient themselves in the present. I first define American exceptionalism and describe evangelicals' distinct understanding of this concept as a way into stewardship. Then I analyze how evangelicals animated exceptionalist discourses to align evangelicalism with American patriotism and justify conservative political action. Finally, I examine how black evangelicals problematized "Christian America" by offering an alternative account.

American Exceptionalism and a Call to Stewardship

Americans have long given shape to their experiences through the lens of American exceptionalism. From John Winthrop's call for a fledgling colony to be a "city upon a hill" to Ronald Reagan's later impression of America as a "shining city on a hill," American leaders have described their people as God's people, set apart for a special purpose.⁴ Many scholars have surveyed the role of American exceptionalism in political discourse, tracing its roots to the Puritans who felt a shared mission to transform the world. Those early Americans, argued Robert Bellah, "saw themselves on a divinely appointed 'errand into the wilderness' with profound personal, ecclesiastical, and world-historical meaning."⁵ Appropriating the covenant mentality of the Israelites, John Winthrop framed the New World as a promised land that required the Puritans' faithfulness to God and each other in order to uphold their covenant. A "rhetoric of social control" pervaded this covenant since only the preservation of communal values assured the people of God's continued blessing.⁶

Covenantal rhetoric has since sustained the collective vision for America as an exceptional nation. For example, Denise Bostdorff argues that George W. Bush used covenant renewal rhetoric after September 11th to unify the people and grant meaning to

the fight against “profane” international actors.⁷ Bush portrayed America as the best of humankind; as the world’s leader in military and economic strength, America was a necessary and righteous actor on the world stage. As Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner argue, the “righteous spirit of exceptionalism” can be observed in moments like September 11th when the “United States customarily identifies itself as an exception to the rule of human history—as an innocent nation exempt from earthly constraints and endowed with the manifest destiny of a chosen people.”⁸ A distinct set of national values undergirds this ideology, setting America apart from its international competitors.

Americans have been bound by ideals that Seymour Martin Lipset identifies as liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire governance.⁹ Pieced together, these communal self-perceptions illustrate the liberal roots of American exceptionalism.¹⁰ According to Sacvan Bercovitch, these consensus-based values have perpetuated “middle-class hegemony” and the belief in “commonplace prosperity: the simple, sunny rewards of American middle-class culture.”¹¹ Ultimately, the rhetoric of American exceptionalism has promoted the quintessential marks of the “American” success story—its economy, its freedoms, its military, and its religion. Public figures thus draw upon exceptionalist rhetoric to imbue the nation as a moral, economic, or spiritual exemplar. For many religious Americans in the mid-20th century, the nation’s “Christian” character subsumed and often supplied its other exemplary qualities.

Modern American evangelicals inherited a strong sense of American exceptionalism rooted in the belief that the nation was Christian in essence—from its founding to the continued effort of the faithful.¹² By inhabiting the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, they identified with the nation as a covenant people working out their

call to steward. As Americans confronted the social and political trials of the twentieth century, evangelicals fulfilled their stewardship role by positioning themselves as the guardians of American values, which they increasingly mythologized as Christian. In this section, I argue that evangelicals stewarded the nation in response to series of issues that the nation faced from the mid-nineteenth century onward: first, the social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; second, the rise of nativism in the 1920s; third, the restructuring of American religion during and after World War II; finally, the freedom movements that characterized the 1960s and 1970s.

In the late 19th century, evangelicals worked on behalf of social reform movements, such as prohibition and child labor reform, to promote Christian morals. This iteration of stewardship fostered expectations that if evangelicals advanced the gospel through social reform, the nation would increasingly abide by Christian principles and fulfill its exceptional role in the world.¹³ George Marsden notes, “there had seemed to be reasonable hope for establishing the foundations of something like a ‘Christian America’” that could then usher in the kingdom of God on a global scale.¹⁴ William Jennings Bryan, a popular evangelical of the time, believed “in the destiny of the United States to guide the world morally.”¹⁵ His hopes for the exemplary faith of America illustrated the optimism of many evangelicals working and praying for social improvements. Yet, by the 1910s, World War I and the fundamentalist/modernist schism dashed evangelical dreams of peace and national religious consensus. Instead of the harmonious Christian nation that many evangelicals had imagined, theologies clashed and Americans united against the “un-American other.”¹⁶

Driven by popular expressions of American exceptionalism during and after the Great War, evangelicals adopted more militant, nationalistic rhetoric. Jonathan Ebel argues that President Wilson's use of covenantal rhetoric to shore up national unity in the face of war reminded Americans "that there were noncovenanted people in the world" and "that the time had come for the chosen to join the war against the unchosen."¹⁷ Many evangelicals copied Wilson's efforts, coupling the aims of Christianity and nationalism. In 1917, evangelist Billy Sunday argued, "Christianity and Patriotism are synonymous terms and hell and traitors are synonymous."¹⁸ Wilson and Sunday demonstrated how the war shifted the focus from American exceptionalism via social reform to a battle against the un-American. In the wake of the Great War, American religion also experienced three major "disturbances" that tightened the relationship between Christianity and nativism: the Red Scare, Yellow Scare, and the Ku Klux Klan. During the religious power struggles of the 1920s, Christians from various denominations defended their claims to "100% Americanism" and churches participated in "constrained adaptation," competing with one another for members.¹⁹ The winners were those perceived as the most "American," which often translated to those with the strongest anti-Communist or anti-immigrant message.²⁰ By the early 20th century, evangelicals witnessed the rewards that could be gained by identifying with the nation and framing themselves as exemplary Americans.

Fundamentalists in the 1930s also participated in the discourse of American exceptionalism by framing American history and their role in the nation in terms of a covenant. They focused on the complementary forces of human agency and divine will whereby the continual renewal of the covenant between God and his people would ensure His blessings on the nation. However, fundamentalists feared that they, rather than the

nation more broadly, were responsible for maintaining the covenant in lieu of increasing apostasy. Joel Carpenter argues that throughout the 20th century, fundamentalists viewed themselves as a “faithful remnant” in the midst of the cultural and political decay of America.²¹ Holding an “ahistorical” view of the bible with dispensationalist theology,²² fundamentalists interpreted their contemporary state in light of a future that would soon culminate in Christ’s return.²³ Fundamentalist rhetoric constantly balanced hope for revival alongside their impression of the coming apocalypse; thus, they ambivalently separated from the world but maintained a desire for the “restoration of Christian America” through the revival of an idealized puritan past.²⁴ Mainstream evangelicals in midcentury America retained many of these fundamentalist impressions even as they shirked the militant separatism of fundamentalists.

By the 1940s, a growing neo-evangelical movement could less paradoxically adapt the rhetoric of American exceptionalism because modern evangelicals were much more open to participating in the broader culture than their fundamentalist forebears. Sociological and political changes brought on by World War II catalyzed a major restructuring of the religious landscape, one that appeared less embattled. The publicity of religion by leading institutions, including the presidency, drove religious consensus throughout the Cold War. For example, the Eisenhower administration encouraged religion as “essential to American life,” shaping the moral character of the nation.²⁵ National leaders followed suit, focusing on a “romantic” national past and shared religious heritage.²⁶ This storied heritage constructed a kind of national myth that evangelicals largely embraced—America was and should presume itself to be a Christian nation. From the “democratization” of public prayer to the additions of “under God” in

the pledge of allegiance (1954) and “In God we trust” on currency (1956),²⁷ “Americans were told, time and time again, that the nation not only should be a Christian nation but also that it had always been one.”²⁸ U.S. institutions strategically promoted religion in order to combat communism—“a theologically alien enemy” that “arms alone could not defeat.”²⁹ The millennial theology of evangelicals met a willing partner in a “spiritual industrial complex.”³⁰ That is, the doomsday anti-communist rhetoric of the state enlivened evangelicals to steer the nation in the midst of Cold War anxieties.³¹ The Christian soul of the nation was what made it exceptional; therefore, evangelicals felt well-positioned to spur on the faith of Americans.

Evangelicals framed themselves as the proper stewards of the nation, melding the aims of faith and national interest. Evangelical figures like Billy Graham fostered what Tracy Fessenden describes as the “convenient fiction of a Protestant consensus at the heart of American culture [that] came to take the status of truth.”³² Graham urged Americans to return to their Christian heritage in the midst of national crisis and evangelical revivals popularized a “civic faith” in American democracy.³³ “Revival in America” and the “evangelization of the world” were “inseparable slogans” among evangelical organizations like the NAE and Youth for Christ.³⁴ Some religious figures, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, critiqued the union of nationalism and religion, stating that it prevented religion from speaking prophetically to the nation.³⁵ Yet, most religious leaders agreed that the new battle centered on the “American soul,”³⁶ a battle that evangelicals were winning until the cultural upheavals of the 1960s.

Evangelicals framed the challenges of 1960s and 1970s as a watershed moment for America. As they sought to steward the nation, many evangelicals took on an

increasingly public role against pluralism. Martin Marty contends that even though evangelicals felt marginalized by the secular world, they adopted increasingly aggressive and defensive tactics to “reshape social life in America” that they saw as morally compromised by liberation movements.³⁷ The mantle of stewardship was noticeably conservative. Evangelicals saw themselves “at harmony with American life” as an ideal past that had been forgotten by their fellow citizens.³⁸ They looked to the faith of the founding fathers as a “model for present action” as they yearned for a mythic Christian nation.³⁹ This sensibility guided evangelical action through the 1970s and gained even more traction with the rise of the Religious Right.

To explain evangelical participation and leadership in the Christian Right, we can see its trajectory from a fundamentalist past rife with suspicion of the un-American. Disaffected evangelicals in the 1960s were drawn in by rightist appeals articulating a true Americaness that resonated with some of their fundamentalist roots—what William Martin deems an “older Christian Right.”⁴⁰ The leaders of the New Christian Right felt that “the nation was once better than it is now” and their ability to draw upon that narrative drove their political success.⁴¹ For example, Jerry Falwell’s “I love America” rallies helped the Christian Right reinvigorate the myth of America’s “holy history” as a Christian nation.⁴² Mainstream evangelicals framed themselves as stewards of America, best suited to guide America back to its spiritual roots.

In this section I have described four historical trends that illustrated the changing ways in which evangelicals inhabited the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, making the nation’s faith the primary driver of its exceptional status. First, 19th century evangelicals hoped to reform America, making it the Christian nation that could inspire

the world to turn to Christ. Second, at the turn of the century, the nationalistic rhetoric of fundamentalists aligned evangelicalism with nativist movements that ultimately marginalized them from the nation. Third, in mid-century America, evangelicals adapted to the restructuring of American religion by defining themselves as archetypal Americans. Finally, in the 1960s and 1970s evangelicals framed themselves as faithful heirs of the founders, pointing the nation back to its founding principles in the midst of rapid social change. In sum, over the course of the 20th century, evangelicals increasingly identified their religious mission with a national story that made America chosen among nations. Their trust as stewards was to guard this deposit of the faith.

Christian America

America's bicentennial year offered evangelicals a kairotic moment to refocus the nation on its Christian origins. During a time when Americans grappled with significant social change, "The idea that America was a Christian nation that had forsaken its heritage gained new credibility," especially among nostalgic conservatives.⁴³ Thus, evangelicals constructed a myth of Christian America that framed the founding as a religious moment that inaugurated America's covenant with God. In order to uphold the nation's founding principles, evangelicals urged Americans to reflect on their national story and be "born again" as a Christian nation. Rooting the myth in sacred time allowed evangelical leaders like Billy Graham to locate a historical ideal that transcended across time to address contemporary issues.⁴⁴ Michael Leff argues, "the sacred, because it has no progressivity, becomes atemporal, and it can serve as a fixed standard for judging the flux of local circumstance."⁴⁵ Myth was a fitting vector for the kind of "eternal present"

Graham sought to construct.⁴⁶ According to Robert Rowland, “Myths usually occur outside of normal historical time or in a period (such as the American revolution) that, because of the great symbolic power associated with it, has been transformed into mythical time. Myth takes us out of history to solve the problems posed by history.”⁴⁷ Graham turned to the myth of the national founding as a way to condemn current social problems and renew the American covenant. By returning to founding principles, Graham argued that the nation could insure its exceptional status. In this section, I examine the ways in which Billy Graham shaped a myth of America’s founding that pushed Christianity into the starring role. This myth laid the groundwork for the political action of evangelicals, particularly resolutions made by the National Association of Evangelicals.

As the nation’s most popular religious figure and a symbol of “not only Establishment Evangelicalism but also Establishment America,”⁴⁸ Graham stood poised to preach a gospel of American exceptionalism through the myth of Christian America. In 1976, Billy Graham headlined several prominent bicentennial events. The first was “Honor America Day,” a July 4th celebration funded by corporations that had largely supported the Nixon campaign.⁴⁹ Historian Kevin Kruse describes the event’s attendees as the Silent Majority: “overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and middle-aged.”⁵⁰ Most event leaders made clear that their political critics were unwelcome, but Graham took a less controversial approach. He insisted that the event was apolitical, meant only to realign the nation with “The American Way, which stood for ‘family values’ and a ‘Christian,’ or increasingly ‘Judeo-Christian’ heritage.”⁵¹ Framed as both a historical reality and ideal form of American life, the American Way buttressed American

exceptionalist rhetoric. The past and present collided such that the seemingly atemporal principles associated with the American Way functioned as “primal truths” that made the “present recoverable as a return to origins.”⁵² Graham tethered these truths across time to serve as the basis for his myth of Christian America.

Throughout 1976, Graham adapted a bicentennial sermon that served as a mythical framing story of the American people.⁵³ Graham delivered an exemplar of this sermon type at the Bicentennial Festival of Faith on November 22, 1976. He first rooted the myth in the contingencies of the moment saying, “I believe it is time to proudly gather around our flag and all that it has historically stood for. I might be criticized by some for saying that, because many say that it is ‘civil religion.’ It is no such thing!”⁵⁴ Graham demystified the notion that patriotism equated worship of the state. On the contrary, Graham felt that a proper understanding of American history showed that the nation was built on Christian principles—a thing to be celebrated. He narrated a story that made Christians, motivated by faith, the key actors in a New Israel.

Graham viewed his evangelical predecessors as Jeremiahs calling the people back to God as the Puritans had done a century earlier through covenantal rhetoric. Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the Puritans appropriated biblical covenantal theology to establish a “typology of America’s mission” as a nation set apart for a special purpose.⁵⁵ Like the Israelites, God made a promise to bless them if they maintained a holy community. The covenant they established evidenced the beginning of “a pilgrim people making a more perfect union” for centuries to come.⁵⁶ Their unity in the face of great challenges exemplified the necessary human side of the covenant to be renewed by successive generations. Graham often depicted early America as a Christian monolith, but he

acknowledged that the nation's history often lacked "dedicated Christians" like the Puritans. He said, "After the Puritans, there crowded in a diverse lot of adventurers, slave traders, ex-prisoners and unbelievers. But it is 'a mark' of their religious vitality that their ideals largely prevailed in early America."⁵⁷ The Puritans modeled for the founders and later Christians how to create a national spiritual legacy. Graham traced these Christianized American exceptionalist themes from the Puritans' faith to the revolutionary ideas of the founders.

Graham credited the First Great Awakening as a major catalyst for American Independence.⁵⁸ In one bicenntinal sermon he argued that the awakening "probably did more to prepare the way for the desire for Independence than any single event."⁵⁹ He linked the 18th century itinerant preacher's focus on the individual conscience to the birth of American democracy.⁶⁰ The foundational tenets of the Declaration of Independence, he argued, were Christian ideals taken from the Bible. God delivered the Jews in Exodus and Jesus preached "deliverance to the captives, to set to set at liberty them that are bruised."⁶¹ These biblical examples inspired the founders' emphasis on freedom. Graham claimed, "The men who signed the Declaration of Independence were moved by a magnificent dream. This dream amazed the world 200 years ago. This dream was rooted in a book called the Bible."⁶² Graham conceded that the signers of the Declaration of Independence varied in degrees of faith, but the document itself reflected "the feelings of men to whom religious faith was all-important. There was not an atheist or agnostic among the 56 who signed that Declaration."⁶³ In other words, Graham argued that the document collectively testified to the Christian ideas that fomented the revolution in spite of the personal lack of faith in Jesus among any individual founders. Despite their

failings, he presented them as martyrs, sacrificing their personal safety and security for the good of the people. Graham argued, “Because they signed that document, some were captured and hanged. Some were stripped of their possessions, some were jailed.”⁶⁴ America’s forefathers had sacrificed greatly for their faith; they were the heroes of the myth.

The challenge for Graham’s contemporary audience was clear: Christians, the stewards of their moment, needed to follow in faith the story laid before them. The covenantal promise of liberty “was present in the founding documents, our creed, but its realization required people to act.”⁶⁵ The covenant again needed to be renewed. Graham argued that evangelicals were best positioned to guide the nation’s spiritual rebirth since they practiced the values the majority of the nation had cast aside. In a jeremiadic turn, Graham warned of the coming peril if Americans ignored the “moral and spiritual laws” that grounded the nation.⁶⁶ He hopefully concluded that religious renewal throughout the nation provided an “encouraging” sign “even though it only involves a minority.”⁶⁷ Graham saw promise in the “resurgence of evangelicalism in the country that we have not known since the awakening in Colonial times,” evidenced in part by the election of President Carter.⁶⁸ America’s bicentennial offered a moment to revive the nation’s spirit by looking back on the sacred ideals that had made America great.

Covenant renewal rhetoric complemented the mythic form of Graham’s address, creating a kind of “pragmatic charter” for the nation.⁶⁹ In Graham’s myth, America’s origin story illuminated its purpose as a nation guided by God from the beginning to be “a beacon” to the world.⁷⁰ Graham’s retelling of history transcended contemporary realities and functioned as “a narrative resurrection of primeval reality.”⁷¹ Claude Lévi-

Straus argues that “what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.”⁷²

Graham presented a set of sacred ideals grounded in the past but requiring certain actions for the future preservation of America. To maintain American exceptionalism, the nation needed to testify that its freedoms were found in its allegiance to God. For Graham, this promise, made by the founders, reflected a historical truth that covenantal theology allowed him to bring to bear in the present. As Michael Steudeman argues, myth can seem to function as an “‘apolitical’ solution to complex political problems.”⁷³ Graham appeared merely to urge reverence toward American history and faithfulness to the Christian values modeled by the founders. But this seemingly “depoliticized moral responsibility” argument served as the groundwork for the conservative political action of a largely white evangelical community.⁷⁴ The rhetoric of covenant renewal that Graham infused into the national myth functioned as a form of social control.⁷⁵ The covenant bound the people to a set of values that implicated the entire community. This contractual provision convinced evangelicals to take on more political responsibility as stewards to realign the nation. As much as evangelicals celebrated American history as a powerful narrative of individual liberty and religious freedom, they resisted social changes that threatened to undo American traditions.

The myth of Christian America animated the political rhetoric of evangelicals and evangelical institutions. In particular, NAE members echoed the patriotic themes in Graham’s bicentennial speech. In a 1971 convention address, Harold Lindsell stated, “Evangelicals generally are patriotic Americans...the believer who takes seriously the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be a patriot in the right sense. But he will not be an

uncritical supporter of Ceasar's kingdom. He will praise his country when it's right and he will do all in his power to correct it when it's wrong."⁷⁶ "Patriotism in the right sense" implied a kind of stewardship that would offer a corrective, when necessary, stemming from the belief that evangelicals should preserve the Christian principles that birthed the nation. Evangelical institutions such as the NAE issued resolutions, published papers, and encouraged members to take political action, usually on behalf on conservative causes.

In 1971, the NAE published a series of papers to delineate the association's position on several public issues.⁷⁷ Assumptions about the nation's Christian heritage, implicit or explicit, functioned as the argumentative thread for many of these statements. For example, in a paper on church-state separation, Robert Cook argued, "The principles of Christianity and godliness can and should pervade the laws and institutions of the United States."⁷⁸ He suggested that Christianity and the American legal system were complementary because the Christian thought undergirded the principles of freedom and democracy. Even more, this link between faith and law maintained the nation's covenantal relationship with God. Another paper on a prayer amendment meant to combat Supreme Court decisions banning prayer and Bible reading in public schools, accused the Justices of changing "by judicial fiat the philosophical base of our entire society from the Judeo-Christian philosophy upon which our nation was founded to a philosophy of secularism."⁷⁹ Throughout these papers, the writers indicated that a secular imposter would replace the Christian character of the nation, loosening its claim to exceptionalism. The courts in particular were to blame for banning public forms of religiosity and leading the country down the slippery slope of communism, homosexuality, and welfare.⁸⁰ For the NAE, the worst instantiations of a country without

Christian principles were often reflected in the denigration of America's economic values.

The American economic system was essential to preserving the American Way. Thus, the NAE used communism as a framing device to cast regulatory economic policies as un-American. NAE leaders told the Associated Press, "The NAE is critical of socialistic trends in politics and economics including the welfare state. The average evangelical senses a humanistic and materialistic philosophy underlying these trends. The New Testament emphasizes basically individual responsibility."⁸¹ Evangelicalism's robust culture of individual agency again influenced its resistance to the structural changes of the Great Society. In particular, evangelicals perceived the logic of welfare in opposition to the permanence of individual sin, irresolvable by social programs. Only an aggressively free market economy could encourage individuals to fight complacency, laziness, and materialism. In 1967, the NAE passed a resolution stating, "As evangelical Christians we greatly deplore the evidences of accommodation to the ideology supportive of Communism observable in America today...we see this in the evidence of a growing disregard for the rights of the private sector and the growing acceptance of the doctrine, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' not as a Christian principle but as a fixed economic law."⁸² "In such a time as this," the resolution concluded, "a society which once was described as Christian" should resist "every form of atheistic Communism."⁸³ The resolution constructed "Christian America" and capitalism as mutually inclusive; one required the maintenance of the other. The NAE took on the task of maintaining and defending the free market as part of stewardship. The NAE's Office of Public Affairs held seminars to inform and train evangelicals on the

encroaching influences of communism, encouraging them to “see how they could participate in a free society.”⁸⁴

Evangelical leaders like Billy Graham imagined Christian America through a myth that set the covenant nation on a path toward American exceptionalism. The myth appeared “neutral and innocent” but carried with it a way of transcending the present in order to advance a political agenda.⁸⁵ Graham’s narrative functioned less as a rational argument and more as a blueprint of abstract values that could then be rhetorically taken up in political argument. If a broad evangelical audience presumed the Christian origins of the nation, the premises of later arguments about maintaining America’s Christian character were assumed as universal principles. Without extrapolating from the myth, however, we can see that it operated on a set of historical discrepancies that neglected the fatal flaws of the nation, slavery and racism predominantly. If the myth itself inherently celebrated white American history and ignored its impact on black Americans, the political conclusions drawn from this myth further inculcated evangelicals in white conservatism. By promoting and ultimately requiring that evangelicals buy into this myth and its political implications, evangelical leaders and institutions alienated racial minorities whose personal and collective histories testified to a different America—one that oppressed African Americans and maintained white privilege.

A Black Past

Black evangelicals problematized “Christian America” by critiquing popular evangelical constructions of America’s past and present. Chiefly, they argued that mythologizing the origins of “Christian America” through the lens of white Americans

neglected to account for the nation's black holocaust and its effects on black Americans.⁸⁶ The myth advocated by Billy Graham and the NAE belied the church's comfortable relationship with the American establishment and its disregard for black communities. Thus, black evangelicals offered an alternate reading of American history to challenge the complacency of white evangelicalism. In their national story, the atrocities endured by blacks revealed the self-interested motivations of white Americans from the nation's birth to their contemporary moment. America's story was no grand myth of faithful Christians seeking freedom and equality but one built in the trenches of sinners striving for power. In this section, I first examine the writings of two prominent black evangelists that describe the experiences of being both black and evangelical in America. Then, I turn to a discussion of the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA), an institution founded separately from the NAE to address the needs of black communities. Together, these texts illustrate the ways in which black evangelicals constructed the black past and present, redefining evangelicalism's normative relationship with African Americans and "America."

In the late 1960s, two prominent black evangelists, Tom Skinner and William Pannell, wrote consciousness-raising narratives in which the authors described the significance of the black past and its implications for their present experience. According to Sudhi Rajiv, "Black consciousness grew out of the unrelieved suffering and psychological traumas of a group of people who were subjected to overt and covert racism in the United States of America for about four centuries."⁸⁷ Skinner and Pannell adhered to the norms of black autobiographical narratives as sites for enacting black consciousness.⁸⁸ In the tradition of James Baldwin and Richard Wright, these narratives

served as synecdochal representations of the black experience in a white-dominated society. Unique to Skinner and Pannell, however, was their dual audience of black Americans and white evangelicals. Both authors hoped to prick the conscience of the latter, awakening them to the plight of African Americans in the Church and correcting false impressions of “Christian” America. Much as Martin Luther King, Jr. sought to “appeal to the conscience of white moderates” by shifting “discussion from the political to the moral realm,” Skinner and Pannell disrupted the American exceptionalist rhetoric of white evangelicalism by exposing the racial disparities that made this discourse impossible for African Americans to accept.⁸⁹ They ultimately promoted an understanding of America that differed radically from their white counterparts by replacing the narrative. Skinner and Pannell hoped that their corrective autobiographical narratives would illustrate the collective neglect of the evangelical church and its misguided patriotism to a country with a past it had not fully understood.

Tom Skinner’s memoirs, *Black and Free* (1968) and *How Black is The Gospel* (1970), narrated his life from teenaged Harlem gang leader to evangelist. In many ways, Skinner’s story followed the patterned Christian conversion story—a blind sinner given sight by Christ. One night as Skinner was readying for a gang fight, he heard the gospel message on the radio. In a testimony that would have been familiar to white and black evangelicals, Skinner described the transformative experience of turning his life over to Christ. Little else in his testimony would have been comfortable, however, for white readers. Without reservation, Skinner described his previous alienation from Christianity as an upwardly-mobile-white-man’s religion. He stated, “The impression I had of Jesus from the white society that preached about Him was as the defender of the American

system, president of the New York Stock Exchange, head of the Pentagon, chairman of the National Republican Committee—a flag-waving, patriotic American.”⁹⁰ For Skinner, Jesus symbolized establishment America, an America familiar to Billy Graham but foreign to the black community in which he lived. So, while Graham spoke of patriotism and Christianity with ease, Skinner constructed a radically different Jesus, the “kind of Christ who could look the establishment in the face and say, ‘You brood of vipers!’”⁹¹ Skinner sought to reclaim Christ from the pampering God of white America to a “tough Jesus, a Christ Who could help one live with the anguished cry of a mother whose two-week-old baby had been gnawed to death by a vicious rat or burned alive in a fire caused by faulty wiring.”⁹² By jarring his audience with vivid descriptions of poverty in Harlem, Skinner presented a reality so dissonant from the lives of white middle class evangelicals that they would have been hard-pressed to respond with celebratory clichés of American exceptionalism.

Skinner’s attention to racism and poverty in America focused his narratives as much as his Christian faith. A witness to Christ and to the racial disparities that surrounded him, Skinner dedicated *Black and Free* to “the more than 22 million Negroes in this country, many of them frustrated because they were born black” but also to “the evangelical Christian church in America,” which he argued, “failed desperately” to address racism and poverty.⁹³ Evangelicals, the group that should have been in the best position to lead racial reconciliation lacked the resolve because the myth of Christian America clouded their vision. Skinner unveiled the inaccuracies of this myth by amplifying black histories that white evangelicals ignored and linking them to current problems.

Although whites often blamed African Americans for the social ills their communities faced in the 1960s, Skinner argued that these problems were the consequences of systematic discrimination and racial violence, traced from the nation's inception.⁹⁴ By narrating American history from an African American perspective, Skinner hoped to deconstruct the “irony” of an American Revolution driven by the ideals of freedom and opportunity but blinded by racism.⁹⁵ Metaphorically, he made slavery a congenital weakness at the heart of the infant nation. He claimed, “America was born with a grotesque, cancerous disease called slavery. The disease lingers to this day in many forms and subtle variations...sometimes it masquerades as democracy and free enterprise, but the effect is the same.”⁹⁶ Instead of buttressing the founding moment as a mythic exemplar of freedom, Skinner described America's origin story as bloodied with the original sin of their forefathers, inherited by subsequent generations. Like Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, which presented “African-American history as the suppressed but critical counterpoint to the myths of white America,” Skinner vivified the atrocities African Americans endured over the centuries—rape, lynching, familial separation, economic discrimination—and their lasting impressions on the black psyche.⁹⁷ By narrating a collective black past, Skinner elucidated not only the burden of being black in America but also the privilege of being white.

Skinner insisted that the link between white power and the church perpetuated the systems that oppressed African Americans. Skinner argued, “Christianity was used in the Western Hemisphere for many hundreds of years to maintain the white man's economic, political and social control over the black man.”⁹⁸ He faulted white Christians for “worshipping in their white church, serving their best interests in the name of their white

God.”⁹⁹ According to Skinner, the church served as an agent of the status quo that benefited from institutional racism. Fredrick Douglass’s excoriation of “Christian America” echoed in Skinner’s claims that the nation, which neglected to see the humanity in its black citizens, lacked resonance with the Christian gospel. Douglass declared, “I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ. I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christian.”¹⁰⁰ Skinner, too, dissociated Christ from the hypocrisy of white evangelicals who claimed the benefits of their race but not the obligations of their religion.

Evangelicalism’s hypocrisy, Skinner claimed, alienated black Americans from Christ. This was perhaps Skinner’s strongest critique because evangelicals prioritized gaining new believers. Like Skinner before he became a believer, many blacks were understandably suspect of the image of a white Christ, which had become “a contemptuous symbol to the black man of all the fakery and chicanery endorsed by so many white Christians.” Skinner argued, “If Christ takes on the image of an Anglo-Saxon Protestant suburbanite, He’s obviously not for black men. It is inconceivable that this kind of Christ would die for black people.”¹⁰¹ As whites negotiated their role in the nation, their stewardship focused on systemic maintenance and conservation. But, Skinner advocated that evangelicals focus on “overthrowing injustice” and “settings wrong right” because those were “the principles of the Kingdom of God.”¹⁰²

By drawing such distinctions between the foci of black and white evangelicals, Skinner echoed the tenets of James Cone’s black liberation theology. Both writers

published contemporaneously books that illustrated their skepticism of the white church as an oppressive institution.¹⁰³ Appropriating themes from the Black Power movement, Skinner and Cone envisioned liberation for black people but used the gospel as the impetus for change. Skinner, for example, reframed the normative motivations for the black revolution from black-nationalism to the Christian gospel, saying “I am not involved in the black revolution simply because it is ‘black’; I am involved in the black revolution because it is Christ.”¹⁰⁴ Unlike Cone, however, Skinner desired more readily to reconcile with white evangelicals who, he argued, needed Christ as much as blacks.¹⁰⁵ Skinner constructed a kind of evangelicalism that rejected the idea of “Christian America” as derived from history and conservative politics, but one that sought racial reconciliation rooted in the gospel.

A contemporary of Tom Skinner, William Pannell, engaged in many of the same strategies as Skinner. He also corrected sacred narratives of the founding and vivified the gap between white evangelical values and black America in order to revise the goals of evangelicalism. Pannell partnered with Tom Skinner Ministries in 1968 and later became a Professor of Evangelism and Director of Black Church Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. Unlike Skinner, however, Pannell’s story focused more on the challenges of being black within evangelical institutions. He gained an insider’s perspective of evangelical culture by attending a bible college (Fort Wayne) and seeking ministry opportunities alongside his mostly white peers. His memoir, *My Friend, The Enemy*, explored these themes and critiqued evangelicalism’s easy relationship with the American establishment.

Echoing W.E.B. DuBois' description of double-consciousness as a feeling of "two-ness,--an American, a Negro," Pannell expressed a sense of irreconcilability about being a black man in a white-dominated society, particularly in evangelical institutions.¹⁰⁶ Pannell claimed that the burden of both identities left "a man of color to wander all his lifetime in search of himself."¹⁰⁷ He first realized the profound difference of his blackness at a Bible College where he could not date like his white friends and was told he could not easily find employment as a missionary.¹⁰⁸ Despite his white education among Christians, Pannell felt the erasable impact of slavery and oppression. Like Skinner, Pannell insisted that a right understanding of these historical realities called the sincerity of America's Christian principles into question. He asked, "What is wrong with a system which blithely permits a 'modified form of slavery' to prevail 100 years after its legal structure was abolished? What meaning do our cherished words have if this is not a land of the 'free' or if 'free' has a limited or parochial application? What does it mean that 'all men are created equal,' and are endowed by their Creator with certain 'inalienable rights?'"¹⁰⁹ Pannell sought meaning in the supposedly Christian foundation of the nation, but he found promises that acknowledged the humanity of whites alone.

In addition to Pannell's critique of America's past, he began to see the church as an appeaser of white power. He argued, "the church is middle-class, even that section called evangelical, and rather than challenge the oppressive system which denudes men of their humanity, the church reflects these majority values."¹¹⁰ Pannell claimed that the church benefitted from an economic system that allowed white upward mobility, but disadvantaged blacks from birth. In a particularly excoriating passage, Pannell stated:

I personally know churches in all kinds of denominations whose flight to suburbia testifies eloquently to their rejection of me as a brother and neighbor. But then perhaps I am making too much of this. After all, isn't our 'citizenship in heaven?' Yes, but that gives little balm when viewing the bloodied form of a twelve-year-old lying face down on Newark's cold pavement. Scriptural quotations about the end time and the spirit of the age fail to soothe a breaking spirit when one views children looting a neighborhood store for a paltry bag of potato chips. But what would my white brother know of this? He taught me to sing 'Take the world But Give Me Jesus.' I took Jesus. He took the world and then voted right wing to insure his property rights.¹¹¹

Pannell laid bare the essential hypocrisy of white evangelicals simultaneously pining for heaven, but seeking to advance their own self-interest on earth. Like Skinner, Pannell presented the everyday struggles of black America to make visible the realities of African Americans living in poverty. Evangelicals, he argued, had fallen into the temptations of white privilege, blending "Christianity with American patriotism (it's called nationalism when we criticize its manifestation in Africa), free enterprise, and the Republican party."¹¹² As Skinner argued, these cultural and political associations were not palatable for most black Americans. Black Power was a more appealing cry than American exceptionalism. Thus, African Americans could not participate in the same rituals of "Christian America" as their white counterparts—Honor America rallies and NAE trainings. Pannell knew that he could "no longer be a standard evangelical Christian, content merely to preach a typical evangelical Gospel...the time had come to re-evaluate the Gospel in terms of its meaning and application for our time."¹¹³ For evangelicalism to

thrive among blacks and whites, patriotic rhetoric and religious hypocrisy needed to bend to the demands of justice in the gospel.

The National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA) organized in 1963 amid concerns that white evangelical institutions like the NAE neglected black Americans. In Tom Skinner's words: "To the shame of the so-called white, evangelical, conservative Christian in the United States, he does not support financially morally, spiritually or in any other way, works that are attempting to communicate the message of Jesus Christ to the Negro in America."¹¹⁴ Although the NAE offered some financial support to more traditional evangelistic activities among African American ministries, it did not begin to invite black evangelicals to speak on race problems until the late 1970s.¹¹⁵ Like Skinner and Pannell, these speakers pointed to the neat relationship between "Christian America" and evangelicalism as a primary reason for the lack of black evangelicals. For example, John Perkins, a black evangelical and civil rights activist, spoke with the NAE's Social Action Commission in 1979. He told NAE members, "You may already know that the Gospel, as it has been presented in America, has not significantly affected the moral, social, economic, and spiritual lives of 25-30 million black people. There are many reasons why the Gospel has neglected black Americans, but it should not shock us in view of the fact this Christian nation historically enforced the most savage form of slavery known to man."¹¹⁶ Perkins grounded contemporary racial inequalities in American history. His reference to "this Christian nation" ironically functioned to reveal the inconsistencies of the nation's efforts to oppress its black citizens with its supposed Christian character. This irony applied not only to the state but also to churches. Rufus Jones offered a similar critique in a paper reviewed by the NAE. He argued, "Not only

did our churches deny Blacks and other minorities equality and justice as provided in the Declaration of Independence, but they also refused to permit them to enter their churches where they might hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁷ The mutual rejection of black Americans from civil and religious society revealed the parallel ways in which the state and church participated in racial discrimination. Again, for evangelicals who valued the personal salvation of all people, to turn anyone away from Jesus was an unforgivable sin. Without institutional acknowledgment of the impact of slavery and systematic discrimination on black Americans, the NAE had little hope of connecting with that constituency. More important, these disparate historical lenses—the mythic Christian America and a horrific black past—cast alternate visions for what evangelicalism should be in America. For black leaders, the former lens supported the American establishment and neglected the historical and contemporary oppression of African Americans. The latter offered a corrective that could explain contemporary inequalities and challenge the white church to act on behalf of the oppressed.

As much as future NBEA leaders felt alienated from white evangelical institutions, they often did not fit in African American church traditions since they were trained at white bible colleges with conservative theology and ministry methods.¹¹⁸ When they began meeting together in 1963, they were tentatively unsure how to make themselves distinct from predominantly white evangelical organizations. William Bentley, one of the NBEA founders described the feeling of organizers:

At first we were not certain as to whom we should direct our ministry, which seems strange...Should we concentrate on our Black community exclusively, or should we attempt an ‘a – race’ approach (which everyone said was the Gospel

Way)? And if racial identity should play a part, a seemingly superfluous question in view of the conscious choice of our name, how could we reconcile ethnic consciousness with Christian witness? Were we any different from white Christians in whose institutions of the time we were for the most part not welcome?¹¹⁹

Bentley noted that black evangelicals' inculcation in conservative white Christian culture made it difficult to reach African Americans because "the standards we were taught to emulate were indigenous to white Christianity, not reflective of Black social and racial reality."¹²⁰ They realized they needed to break from the NAE in order to cast off those standards and form a distinct iteration of evangelicalism—one that elevated black consciousness.

Strains of black liberation theology and Black Power percolated through the formative processes of the NBEA. When the NBEA officially organized in 1963, it described the race-specific part of its mission in this way: "Although our ministry is holistic in scope—dealing with every aspect of life and relating to all classes of people, we nevertheless, like our Lord Jesus, accept the particular call to minister to the needs of the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed, especially as related to Black people."¹²¹ One of the most stark differences between the NAE and the NBEA was the latter's rejection of American exceptionalist rhetoric and its alternate focus on black lives at a local and global level. As the NBEA organized, leaders embraced black liberation as a universal goal reflective of the gospel, especially as they formulated responses to poverty and racial discrimination. For example, the NBEA sponsored the National Black Christian Students, whose 1977 conference members composed a statement of solidarity with "the Oppressed

South African People.” Participants signed a covenant with black South Africans that committed them “to the Lord and to each other and the holistic liberation of our Black community.”¹²² Such a move embodied black liberation theology, which Cone described as “a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ.”¹²³ NBEA members mobilized themselves as part of a larger body of oppressed people seeking justice.

On a more local level, at the second annual convention of the Chicago Chapter, workshops focused on “a church in the black community,” “a biblical curriculum for the holistic liberation of black people,” and “on being black Christian women: married, single, professional.”¹²⁴ Each subject matter focused distinctly on blackness as integral to identity and correspondingly to Christian ministry. Absent from the NBEA was any sign of the kind of patriotic rhetoric of white evangelical leaders and institutions. In a retrospective of the NBEA, William Bentley stated that developing a sense of black consciousness “shaped the image of NBEA far more than any other single factor with the exception of our very deep Christian commitment.”¹²⁵ But, Bentley was somewhat loath to acknowledge the influences of Black Power on black evangelicalism. He stated, “Before ‘Black Power’ became the rallying cry it later did, some Black evangelicals among us were thinking seriously in terms of group consciousness.”¹²⁶ Skinner and Pannell’s autobiographies give credence to the strength of black consciousness among black evangelicals, but Bentley’s claim probably also reflected a discomfort with aligning the NBEA and Black Power. Although the NBEA leaders wanted the organization to be independent from the NEA, they preferred not to alienate conservative evangelicals who

might perceive their new organization as “radical.”¹²⁷ Many of the founders of the NBEA were also more theologically conservative than Cone in terms of biblical hermeneutics. While black evangelicals expressed black consciousness as a social necessity, they still valued the gospel as a message of personal salvation to all people. A more accurate description of the kind of evangelicalism that emerged from the NBEA was one that viewed racial identity as integral to one’s experience of faith.

Conclusion

In the 1970s, Billy Graham’s myth of “Christian America” served as a rhetorical resource for evangelical institutions like the NAE seeking to mobilize politically evangelicals. The myth framed individual liberty as a biblical value that drove the American experiment, particularly its independence. Thus, the story of American exceptionalism became inextricably linked to Christian principles and actors. Covenantal rhetoric complemented the myth because while the myth provided specific the heroes in the Puritans and the founders, the covenant insisted on the emulation of those national heroes. Robert Rowland argues that myth can “wield great power” as a model unifying society.¹²⁸ By retelling this myth, Graham claimed that America’s founding moment inaugurated the nation’s exceptionalism—a status that required the careful maintenance of national values. Graham explicitly proclaimed his belief in America as a “covenant nation” that would “survive just as long as she remains loyal to her spiritual roots.”¹²⁹ He argued that Christians were best positioned to spur the nation on in its covenantal responsibilities.

Taking its cue from Graham, the NAE organized its constituency increasingly on the stewardship of evangelicals, emphasizing their role in preserving the American way. The task of stewardship was historically familiar to evangelicals negotiating social change. Instantiations of stewardship varied over time, but in the 1960s and 1970s, the political stances advocated by the NAE implicated evangelicals in conservative economic and social policies. To advance these policies, the NAE animated the myth Graham composed and embraced covenantal rhetoric as a form of social control. The myth implicitly excluded those who did not conform to the covenant mentality of mainstream evangelicals. Ultimately, evangelicals' efforts to redirect America to its spiritual roots marginalized black evangelicals who resisted the neat construction of America's "Christian" past and critiqued efforts to recover it.

While white evangelicals celebrated a particular version of American history that made heroes of the American founders and institutions, black evangelicals narrated a collective "black past" that challenged the supposed Christian character of a nation that enslaved people and perpetuated racial violence. Prominent African Americans evangelicals like Tom Skinner and William Pannell penned memoirs that elucidated the experience of being black evangelicals in America. Using the strategies of black autobiography, Skinner and Pannell disrupted the myth of Christian America. Their autobiographies did not foil particular policy arguments proffered by the NAE, but they constructed arguments "from personal history" that aligned with black consciousness.¹³⁰ Black consciousness linked black identity to the oppressive history African Americans endured and the continued impact of racial discrimination in black communities. By uncovering the nation's sins against its black populace, these writers also condemned the

church's complicity in upholding racist institutions. Ultimately, they pointed to what Willie James Jennings describes as Western Christianity's "diseased social imagination" tethered to colonialism and racism.¹³¹

Since black evangelicals lacked resonance with the myth of "Christian America," they found it difficult to participate in majority-white evangelical institutions like the NAE. African American evangelicals organized under the NBEA with the goal of meeting the needs of black people with the gospel. They never explicitly embraced black liberation theology, but their actions suggest that they were motivated by black consciousness and liberation from oppressive white institutions. They negotiated the tension of their educational backgrounds at white evangelical institutions with their newfound racially specific ministries. This challenge continued to place the NBEA at the fringes of mainstream evangelicalism and more traditional black parachurch organizations.

¹ Edward M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion* (London: Rivingtons, 1872), 40.

² Ibid. ix

³ "stewardship, n." OED Online, last modified December 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/view/Entry/190092?redirectedFrom=stewardship#eid>.

⁴ John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," 1630, 3rd series 7:31-48, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society; Ronald Reagan, "Election Eve Address," November 3, 1980, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85199>; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 176-184.

⁵ Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11-12.

⁶ Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 47.

⁷ See Denise M. Bostdorff, "George W. Bush's Post-September 11 Rhetoric of Covenant Renewal: Upholding the Faith of the Greatest Generation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 298-299, 303.

⁸ Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, "American Exceptionalism in a Democratic Idiom: Transacting the Mythos of Change in the 2008 Presidential Campaign," *Communication Studies* 60, no. 4 (2009): 361.

⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

¹⁰ Vanessa Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 33.

¹¹ Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, xiii, 155.

¹² George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 4. George Marsden defines Fundamentalism as “militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism.” Evangelicals addressed in this dissertation are best understood as the heirs of fundamentalists from the late nineteenth century into the 1930s. Thus, when I reference fundamentalists in this history section, I am outlining a trajectory of the evangelical movement that grew into the modern evangelicalism of mid-late 20th century America.

¹³ This desire paired well with Postmillennialism, a popular strain of eschatology during this time that argued the world would become increasingly Christian to usher in Christ’s return.

¹⁴ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 124.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁶ I don’t mean to imply that before the turn of the century, Anglo-evangelicals did not marginalize other racial or ethnic groups. However, nationalism during the Great War shifted the focus from Christian unification to rhetorics of suspicion and insularity.

¹⁷ Jonathan Ebel, “From Covenant to Crusade and Back,” in *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, & America*, ed. John D. Carlson and Jonathan H. Ebel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 66.

¹⁸ Quoted in Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 142.

¹⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion Volume 2: The Noise of Conflict 1919-1941* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 79.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 229

²¹ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5-7. Carpenter distinguishes American Christian fundamentalism from other breeds of religious militancy because he notes their belief in a puritan heritage that has given them a “trusteeship for American culture.”

²² Dispensational premillennialism is a theological understanding of history rooted in the belief that there are seven major periods of time from innocence to the kingdom reign of Christ (the millennium). It is based in literal interpretations of prophetic scripture and is the reason many fundamentalists are pessimistic about the world—they see the passing of time as inseparable from increasing apostasy. Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 8.

²³ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, 91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁵ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), xiii, 39; Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion Volume 3: Under God, Indivisible, 1941-1960* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 299.

²⁸ Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, xiii.

²⁹ Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ See Angela M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 26.

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- ³² Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 6.
- ³³ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, 232; Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion Volume 2: The Noise of Conflict 1919-1941*, 330.
- ³⁴ Carpenter, 177.
- ³⁵ See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- ³⁶ Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, 416.
- ³⁷ Martin Marty, "Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 59.
- ³⁸ George Marsden, "Evangelicals, History, and Modernity," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 95.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ⁴⁰ Richard Pierard, "The New Religious Right in American Politics," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 168; William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 1.
- ⁴¹ Mark Noll, *One Nation Under God? Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 6.
- ⁴² Pierard, "The New Religious Right in American Politics," 173; William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, 203.
- ⁴³ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 240.
- ⁴⁴ Myth can be used a resource to make sense of the present. See William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 17.
- ⁴⁵ Michael Leff, "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural," *Communication Reports* 1 (1988): 29.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁴⁷ Robert C. Rowland, "On Mythic Criticism," *Communication Studies* 41, no. 2 (1990): 104.
- ⁴⁸ Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 17.
- ⁴⁹ Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 264.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 267.
- ⁵¹ "The American Way" was termed by Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: And Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 30; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 240.
- ⁵² Leff, "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural," 29.
- ⁵³ I am not implying here that Graham did not believe this story as he told it.
- ⁵⁴ Billy Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," November 22, 1976, p. 3, Collection 265, Box 25, Folder 1, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁵⁵ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 93.
- ⁵⁶ John Murphy, "Barack Obama, the Exodus Tradition, and the Joshua Generation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (2011): 397.
- ⁵⁷ Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," 9.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁵⁹ Billy Graham, "The Neglected Story of the American Revolution Jn. 3:3," November 22, 1976, p. 7, Collection 265, Box 16, Folder 88, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Records of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Wheaton, IL.

⁶⁰ Scholars have problematized this link. Nathan Hatch argues that a spirit of democratization influenced the character and growth of American Christianity in the decades that followed the American Revolution. See Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Jon Butler and Tracy Fessenden question the awakenings as a colony-wide synchronic movement that could explain democratization. Instead, they argue that authority and coercion, not Christian unity, advanced the interests of the church and state. See Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) and Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶¹ Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," 7; Luke 4:18

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Murphy, "Barack Obama, the Exodus Tradition, and the Joshua Generation," 398.

⁶⁶ Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," 19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 100.

⁷⁰ Graham, "Bicentennial Festival of Faith," 5.

⁷¹ Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, 101.

⁷² Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 430.

⁷³ Michael J. Steudeman, "The Guardian Genius of Democracy: The Myth of the Heroic Teacher in Lyndon B Johnson's Education Policy Rhetoric, 1964-1966," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17, no. 3 (2014): 482.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 481.

⁷⁵ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 47

⁷⁶ "Moving Into The Seventies With Christ Dr. Harold Lindsell," April 20, 1971, p. 11, Series 3, Box 56, Folder 9, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁷ "Findings of the Evangelical Action Consultation," Jan 15, 16, 1971, SubSeries 17, Box 147. Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁸ Robert Cook, "Findings of the Evangelical Action Consultation" Jan 15-16, 1971, p. 4, SubSeries 17, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁷⁹ Floyd Robertson, "Findings of the Evangelical Action Consultation" Jan 15-16, 1971, p. 2, SubSeries 17, Box 147, Folder: Evangelical Social Action Commission, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ "Interim Memorandum," n.d., p. 4, SubSeries 17, Box 147, Folder: Associated Press, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁸² Convention Business Meeting Minutes, 1967, p. 10, Series 4, Sub-Series 9, Box 31, Folder 4, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

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- ⁸⁴ Clyde Taylor, "Evangelical Perspective," Feb 26, 1968, p. 1, Program: 1-4, Box 66, Folder 16/17, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.
- ⁸⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hilland Wang, 1972), 125.
- ⁸⁶ See Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1978] 2004), 9; David Stannard, *American Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Raboteau argues that slavery resulted in an African spiritual holocaust, the loss of African religion. Stannard estimates the physical death toll of Africans under the Atlantic slave trade at up to 10 million—the same number that survived the middle passage and seasoning camps.
- ⁸⁷ Sudhi Rajiv, *Forms of Black Consciousness* (New York: Advent Books, 1992), 1.
- ⁸⁸ Magnus Bassey, "The Place of Group Consciousness in Black Autobiographical Narratives," *Journal Of African American Studies* 11, no. 3/4 (2007): 215.
- ⁸⁹ Davi Johnson, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 1 (2007): 2-3.
- ⁹⁰ Tom Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 68.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 70.
- ⁹³ Tom Skinner, *Black and Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 9.
- ⁹⁴ Skinner's second book, *How Black is the Gospel?* (1970), functioned as a natural follow-up to his memoir; in it, he described the historic context for racial and economic injustice in America and applied the gospel as a way to seek justice for African Americans.
- ⁹⁵ Tom Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?*, 22.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ⁹⁷ James Miller, "Integration, Transformation and the Redemption of America: The Fire Next Time and 'A Letter from Birmingham Jail,'" *European Journal of American Culture* 28, no. 3 (2009): 256.
- ⁹⁸ Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?*, 19.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ¹⁰⁰ Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 120.
- ¹⁰¹ Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?* 13.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 82.
- ¹⁰³ See James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1968); James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, NY: Harper & Rowe, 1969).
- ¹⁰⁴ Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?* 82.
- ¹⁰⁵ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 63-64.
- ¹⁰⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri H. Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 11.
- ¹⁰⁷ William E. Pannell, *My Friend, the Enemy* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1968), 14.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 39-40.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, 53.
- ¹¹³ Pannell, 57.
- ¹¹⁴ Skinner, *Black and Free*, 31.
- ¹¹⁵ See my earlier discussion in chapter two on the kinds of black and interracial ministry activities the NAE supported. Joint Committee, Los Angeles Pilot Project, NAE-NNEA, "Report

on Evangelical Action in Watts and South Los Angeles,” June 28, 1966, p. 1, Box 15, Folder 114, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹¹⁶ John Perkins, “Beyond Guilt and Blame,” p. 1, Series 4, Sub-Series 17, Box 38, Folder 17, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹¹⁷ Rufus Jones, “The Bible and Minorities,” p. 2, Series 4, Sub-Series 17, Box 38, Folder 17, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹¹⁸ A.G. Miller, “The Rise of African-American Evangelicalism in American Culture,” in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter Williams (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 259-269; Albert G. Miller, “The Construction of a Black Fundamentalist Worldview: The Role of Bible Schools,” in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Text and Social Texture*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000).

¹¹⁹ William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Chicago: The Author, 1979), 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²¹ “Structure of the National Black Evangelical Association,” p. 2, Series 1, SubSeries 8, Box 185, Folder: National Black Evangelical Association, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹²² “NBEA Outreach May 1978,” p. 1, Series 1, SubSeries 8, Box 185, Folder: National Black Evangelical Association, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹²³ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1968), 17.

¹²⁴ “NBEA Outreach May 1978,” p. 2, Series 1, SubSeries 8, Box 185, Folder: National Black Evangelical Association, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL.

¹²⁵ Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association*, 106.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²⁷ “Structure of the National Black Evangelical Association,” p. 1, Series 1, SubSeries 8, Box 185, Folder: National Black Evangelical Association, National Association of Evangelicals Records, Wheaton College Archives & Special Collections, Wheaton, IL. A NBEA document shows that perceptions of the NBEA changed from “an organization of ‘conservatives’ through a stage where it was recognized by others as a ‘radical’ organization” so NBEA leaders struggled to avoid this among evangelicals.

¹²⁸ Robert C. Rowland, “On Mythic Criticism,” *Communication Studies* 41, no. 2 (1990): 102.

¹²⁹ Billy Graham, “Our Right to Require Belief,” *Saturday Evening Post*, February 17, 1962, 9.

¹³⁰ Martha Solomon, “Autobiographies as Rhetorical Narratives: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Anna Howard Shaw as New Women,” *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 356. Solomon argues that autobiography can serve as implicit argument in support of a social movement.

¹³¹ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 6.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

To bring a “rhetorical perspective” to the study of history is to use rhetoric as a lens through which to interpret history. At a basic level, rhetorical history reflects the classical Aristotelian definition of rhetoric—studying the available means of persuasion in any given case. Thomas Farrell notes, “unless we believe that means of persuasion are fixed and that cases are eternally recurring, what the rhetorician ‘sees’ must vary with the times.”¹ Thus, a rhetorical history analyzes how historical people or movements influenced others by resourcing the social knowledge of their communities and managing their constraints. Methodologically, rhetorical history complements studies of social groups because scholars can interrogate how a group changed as a discursive community over time. That is, we can analyze the persuasiveness of a group’s internal discourse and the ways in which that group formed new or revised collective identities. By framing this dissertation as a rhetorical history, I explored the importance of “evangelical” as an identity claim that defined evangelicalism theologically, socially, and politically.

George Marsden argues that evangelicalism is not only “a grouping with some common heritages and tendencies; it is also for many, self-consciously, a community.”² Since evangelicalism lacks the kind of centralized authority of Catholicism or other protestant denomination, no single adjudicating body has defined who is or who is not an evangelical.³ This lack of formal institutional authority has allowed evangelicals a degree of elasticity and inclusiveness. However, as a community, evangelicals have developed certain vocabularies to constrain their rhetorical traditions. Informal institutional

gatekeepers construct boundaries to focus the purposes of American evangelicalism, particularly during a period of rapid social change.

Like the rest of America in the 1960s and 1970s, evangelicals divided amid the social unrest that characterized those formative years. The freedom movements unearthed deep disagreements among evangelicals about who they were and how they should define themselves. Through informal and formal definitional argument, institutional gatekeepers like Billy Graham and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) reified certain rhetorical traditions to organize the norms of the community, often to the exclusion of others. However, in a series of debates, many progressive evangelicals sought to reshape their community and widen or reclaim the label of “evangelical” by engaging issues of social concern, sexism, and racism.

In the first case study of this dissertation, I examined a debate that centered on the individual. Evangelicals have long emphasized personal salvation over social reform. Of course, many evangelicals have historically broken rank with this locus of attention, particularly when faced with pressing social concerns like slavery, rampant alcoholism, or child labor. But, evangelical institutions in the 1960s and 1970s insisted that social issues could only be resolved through the salvation of individuals and traditional understandings of evangelism. A growing number of evangelicals resisted this perceived over-individualization of faith; they instead (or additionally) embraced the tradition of the social gospel, advocating structural change to pursue justice in the world.

Dual theories of social change rooted this debate. In the first view, to change the social structure without changing the sinful individual was fruitless since sin would simply poison anew the structure. Alternatively, to change the individual without

changing the structure was useless because the individual would be enmeshed in and shaped by that structure. The tension between individual depravity and social inequality defined one major struggle for the evangelical movement in a broader moment of self-definition. Ultimately, evangelical leaders and institutions used the issue of “social concern” as a proxy to define legitimate evangelical identity. Billy Graham and the NAE dissociated “true” evangelicalism from supposedly counterfeit versions by drafting evangelical declarations that privileged personal salvation over structural change. Progressive evangelicals concerned with national issues like militarism and poverty penned contesting declarations that challenged the NAE’s narrow definition of evangelism. Although they founded new institutions such as Evangelicals for Social Action, they were less successful articulating a single locus of attention to drive social change. The expanding evangelical movement fractured over its inability to define corporately the central tenets of evangelicalism as it related to social concern.

Second wave feminism presented another challenge to evangelicalism that resulted in the contentious “woman question.” In the second case study, I argued that as evangelicals debated “the woman question” the rhetorical space of contest centered on the home. Traditionalists resisted the Women’s Liberation Movement by turning to neo-Victorian theological and cultural frameworks that placed women mainly in a domestic role. For traditionalists, gender norms in the home reflected a divine hierarchy with male headship paralleling God’s authority in the world. The Christian home functioned as an exemplary microcosm of divine order that could point others to God. Thus, women could only fulfill their purpose in the order of creation by being submissive wives and mothers.

Traditionalist advocates like Marabel Morgan and Elizabeth Elliot urged women to embrace their God-given distinction as women who thrived in the domestic sphere.

However, “biblical feminists” like Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni organized a Christian Women’s Movement by founding the Evangelical Women’s Caucus (EWC). They promoted women’s equality by constructing the home as a site of divinely sanctioned gender parity with flexible boundaries. Through biblical exegesis, evangelical feminists named liberation as a biblical principle to be lived in the home and beyond its boundaries. The stakes of this issue again implicated a larger definitional debate within evangelicalism—what social positions could fall within the realm of evangelicalism. Dichotomous positions on feminism coexisted within evangelicalism up to a point, beyond which claims of evangelical identity depended on adherence to the traditionalist view. Biblical feminists hoped to secure their evangelical identities through their exegetical approach, but conservative evangelicals cast doubt on their methods and appropriation of secular feminist ideals. Internal divisions also broke apart the EWC. By inviting other progressive causes into the evangelical feminist movement, the realm of social knowledge from which biblical feminists drew fell outside the bounds of a recognizable evangelical rhetorical tradition.

In the final case study, I explored the ways in which evangelicals struggled to negotiate their national, racial, and religious identities. As evangelicals oriented themselves to the shifting political landscape of the 1970s, they employed covenantal rhetoric to make sense of their role in the nation. Billy Graham and the NAE positioned themselves as the proper stewards of America by animating a myth that made the Puritans and the nation’s founders heroes of the faith. The national trajectory that

emerged from this story required the Christian faith of America's citizens to ensure its exceptional status. This myth then laid the groundwork for the political action of evangelicals, particularly NAE resolutions that supported school prayer and conservative economic principles. Evangelical leaders and institutions ultimately instantiated their role as stewards of America, poised to guide the nation back to its founding values. However, conserving an "ideal" Christian past and the "American way" implicated evangelicals in a fraught perpetuation of systems that largely benefited whites.

Black and white evangelicals had different conceptions of how Christianity spoke to their role in the nation. The mythic Christian past that many white evangelicals yearned for had at best alienated and, at worst, exterminated black Americans. Thus, racism precluded many black evangelicals from participating in the kind of American exceptionalist rhetoric of their white counterparts. Black evangelicals offered an alternate reading of American history that challenged white evangelicals to reevaluate American exceptionalism. In the autobiographies of Tom Skinner and William Pannell, they reconstructed a black past that unveiled the atrocities endured by blacks at the hands of white Americans and the church. Additionally, they argued that the legacy of racial violence and discrimination required evangelical leaders to address theological and social issues that could resonate with black communities. Because they felt that white evangelical institutions neglected the needs of African Americans, several prominent black evangelicals founded the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA).⁴ Finding solidarity with one another, they appropriated elements of black liberation theology and black consciousness. Hoping to promote racial reconciliation within evangelicalism, the NBEA maintained its evangelical identity, but its

goals and methods clashed with American exceptionalist rhetoric, which had become a dominant rhetorical tradition within evangelicalism.

The fractures within evangelicalism reflected wider social changes that echoed across the nation. Evangelicals were not immune from the forces of feminism or the Civil Rights Movement; indeed, these movements forced evangelicals to negotiate their positions on social issues. By identifying what evangelicals advocated and how they made those appeals, this project has touched on potential causal connections between evangelicalism and the rise of the Christian Right. Many scholars have taken that to task and this project is not meant to simply provide additional evidence proving the social or political conservatism of evangelicals. However, most histories of evangelicals have not substantively engaged the dynamic rhetorical construction of evangelical identity. Celeste Condit argues, “however vital the knowledge provided by studies of ‘social forces’ that do not focus on public discourse, they have not yet provided us complete understandings.”⁵ I pieced together books, sermons, and archival texts as a rhetorical history of evangelicalism that analyzed how evangelicals’ “processes of identification and confrontation succeeded or failed.”⁶ By approaching texts as potentially normative or constitutive and by subordinating single texts to the larger framework of the evangelical movement over time, I articulated how evangelicals cohered and broke apart in the midst of rapid social change.

My method allowed me to account for points of fracture among evangelicals, pressing against the tendency to make evangelicals a white, male-dominated monolith. Debra Hawhee and Christa Olson warn that scholars may easily write coherent hegemonic narratives that ignore marginalized voices unless they apply “a theoretical

orientation toward change and a methodological commitment to encountering archival contradictions.”⁷ For example, Jessica Enoch describes how feminist rhetorical historians have intervened in dominantly white male histories and sought to recover ways “women throughout history have used rhetoric to participate in public life.”⁸ Archives such as the NAE often privileged the voices of committee leaders, presidents, etc., who did not represent the contesting voices that emerged from evangelical minorities. To incorporate those voices into this history was challenging since, for example, I was limited by the lack of archival material from the NBEA. Thus, I sought to complement my readings with narratives of black evangelicals, books by evangelical feminists, and the EEWC archives to gain a fuller picture of the discursive landscape of evangelicalism. Gary Selby contends that persuasive narrative is “grounded in the social knowledge or common sense of the communities in which they are told.”⁹ Despite the differences among my textual choices for the dissertation, they reflect dialectic conversations about gender, race, and social change. Together, these texts represent a fluid evangelical tradition that suggests they be read intertextually as fragments of evangelical rhetoric from a given moment even as they encourage careful consideration of different generic constraints. As James Jasinski notes, a critic looks at “how context is inscribed in the text.”¹⁰ This “intertextual matrix” that Jasinski describes informed my understandings of how the various texts in this project coalesced as pieces that constituted a larger debate.¹¹ By choosing texts authored by a variety of gendered and raced voices, I explored how a diverse group of evangelicals related to one another and defined the crucial issues of their moment.

I argued that ideal models of evangelical identity manifested in three primary areas: individual reform, an ordered home, and a Christian nation. By examining how

definitions of evangelicalism calcified and evolved across these spaces, I uncovered codes for recognizing evangelical legitimacy, and I discovered the ways in which institutions served as gatekeepers of modern evangelical identity. The historical fractures I have identified reverberate in contemporary debates within evangelicalism as leading institutions still define and bound “evangelical” as an identity claim. The institutional gatekeepers, however, have changed. The NAE no longer has the agenda-setting power it once did. Now, leaders and institutions like Wheaton College, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (The Southern Baptist’s Commission on “applied Christianity”),¹² The Gospel Coalition, John Piper,¹³ and others defend certain tenets of evangelicalism to the exclusion of other “evangelicals.” Allow me to turn to two brief examples that capture this legacy of the boundary drawing.

In December 2015, Larycia Hawkins, a tenured professor of political science at Wheaton College, caused quite a stir when she donned a hijab “in solidarity” with Muslims and declared that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.¹⁴ Wheaton Provost Stanton Jones responded with a letter to Hawkins requesting four areas of clarification since “in affirming that solidarity your fundamental affirmation of and convictions regarding key aspects of our Statement of Faith come directly into question.”¹⁵ This encounter gained attention from those outside of the evangelical community because it involved issues of employment discrimination, racial politics, and tenure. But, at its core this was a debate about whether Hawkins’ statements were beyond the realm of evangelicalism. Southern Baptist leader Al Mohler claimed, “the cost of getting this question wrong is the loss of the Gospel.”¹⁶ The Wheaton administration employed the college’s Statement of Faith as a rulebook for defining legitimate

evangelical expressions of belief and pointing out the many ways in which Hawkins violated those traditions. Matthew Arildsen of Princeton University argued, “a main purpose of these institutions is to purge error through self-reformation.”¹⁷ Hawkins’ lengthy historical defense of her theological position was in many ways irrelevant. Much like declarations issued by evangelical gatekeepers in the 1960s and 1970s, Wheaton’s statement functioned as a premise from which to construct dissociative arguments about true evangelicalism. Hawkins did not fit the definition outlined by Wheaton College. She had already proved herself suspect and “been asked to affirm the college’s statement of faith four times since she started teaching at Wheaton” nine years earlier.¹⁸ Two of her other offenses included the assertion that Christians could learn from black liberation theology and by “suggesting that diversifying the college curriculum should include diplomatic vocabulary for conversations around sexuality.”¹⁹ The first violation hearkens back to the central differences between black and white evangelicals discussed in chapter four. The latter reflects a new boundary drawing issue within evangelicalism: sexuality.

Homosexuality, as a proper expression of human sexuality, remains anathema to many evangelicals. Yet, broader social change has again created some waves within evangelicalism. Matthew Vines’ 2014 book, *God and the Gay Christian*, has functioned rhetorically in a manner similar to *All We’re Meant to Be*. In it, he makes the case for committed, same-sex relationships based on extensive biblical exegesis. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary responded to Vines with the online publication of *God and the Gay Christian?: A Response to Matthew Vines*. This critique rehearses arguments made by critics of biblical feminists in the 1970s. The authors contend that Vines wrote a revisionist interpretation of scripture that cannot logically hold the Bible as infallible

while endorsing homosexuality. Some popular names and institutions have participated in this debate. Rachel Held Evans, a well-known Christian feminist writer has thrown her support behind Vines and same-sex relationships. Since 2008, Evans has been “setting off debate about how far evangelicals can go in stretching theological boundaries and still call themselves evangelicals.”²⁰ But, she left the evangelical fold, as it were, with the publication of her 2015 book, *Searching for Sunday*, which explores her alienation from evangelicalism with regard to gender and sexuality.²¹ After years of critiquing evangelicalism as an insider, she now identifies as an Episcopalian. Vines, on the other hand, still identifies as an evangelical and founded The Reformation Project, which “exists to train Christians to support and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.”²² Although the social attitudes of Americans have moved (relatively) rapidly in the past five years on this issue, the jury is still out on evangelicals and homosexuality.²³

Many other examples illustrate the continued impulse of evangelicals to shore up the ranks of legitimate instantiations of the faith. Ultimately, a person’s position on homosexuality or gender roles can become a kind of willing or unwilling synecdoche for their faith. By policing the boundaries of evangelicalism so rigorously, evangelical gatekeepers run the risk of losing more and more members, especially millennials who are less theologically conservative than the Silent Generation and comprise more of the religious progressive coalition.²⁴ For example, according to Pew Research, “roughly half (51%) of evangelical Protestants in the Millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996) say homosexuality should be accepted by society, compared with a third of evangelical Baby Boomers and a fifth of evangelicals in the Silent generation.”²⁵ Thus,

the debate over homosexuality appears to be a new frontier for evangelicals resisting and embracing the pressures of social change.

Particularly during periods of social change, the evangelical community has managed its collective identity through debate. Two powers regulate these debates: the power of institutions to code evangelicalism by effectively arguing from rhetorical traditions and the power of “tradition” as a rhetorical tradition in itself. Evangelicals depend on their institutions as gatekeepers to legitimize and delegitimize certain positions, which serve as codes for evangelical identity. Bruce Lincoln describes a code as a “reference point” recognized by members of a religious community.²⁶ For example, each of the following might be understood as codes or proxies for legitimate evangelical positions: evangelism as individual reform, the home as a microcosm of “divine order,” or America as a Christian nation. The underlying rhetorical traditions for these codes: individualism, sin, or divine order, to name a few, function as resources taken up to make arguments about legitimate forms of evangelicalism. Thus, the power to code and recode ideas or performances as “evangelical” has been essential for evangelicals jockeying for the power to define evangelicalism.

In one sense, coding is akin to naming—both acts give meaning to a particular symbol. According to Richard Weaver, naming is knowing; by naming evangelicalism in its various forms (evangelical, evangelism) evangelical institutions have reified certain codes and cast others aside.²⁷ Robert Rowland and John Jones argue that naming, or argument from definition, allows the rhetor to define ideologically policies that govern social knowledge and human performance. They claim that definitional argument does two things: first, it “accounts for circumstance”; second, it “includes an axiological

element; it not only describes, but prescribes proper human conduct.”²⁸ Evangelical institutions often develop arguments about their communal purpose that account for changing social circumstances, and they prescribe legitimate expressions of evangelical identity. Thus, certain vocabularies and performances become an accepted part of evangelicalism while others are deemed illegitimate. This dissertation shows that institutions such as the NAE, Billy Graham, or Wheaton College sacralized certain codes as “evangelical” and marginalized others.

For each social issue examined in this dissertation, the trajectories of debate split evangelicals into largely two camps, both of which used “tradition” as a rhetorical resource in different ways. For conservatives, tradition was a resource for truth instantiated in the Bible and historic precedents of pious living. To be a man or woman, for instance, was a fixed identity modeled through historical ideals of womanhood and a divine plan. For progressives, tradition worked as a method for social change because revelation continued through life with God. Biblical feminists, for example, drew inspiration from secular feminism just as they advocated new ways of reading scripture. Throughout the debates I have highlighted, the majority of evangelicals embraced more conservative versions of tradition and, by extension, evangelicalism.

I suspect that more conservative definitions of evangelicalism dominated for two primary reasons. First, the rhetors constructing those definitions more successfully framed their positions as “traditional” in the sense of original, ideal, or most resonant with the Bible. Although progressives may have used similar vocabulary, their attitude towards tradition was simply too foreign for evangelicals focused on preserving Truth. Linda Zerilli draws from Monique Wittig’s illustration of the Trojan Horse to argue that

if radical work, like the Trojan Horse, “is not recognizable as a horse, it will not be taken into the city. If it is too recognizable—not too strange, that is—it will not function as a war machine.”²⁹ Progressive evangelicals, I think, unwittingly constructed a war machine but neglected to dress it up as a horse. The conservative sense of tradition was inextricably linked to truth and to work outside of that rhetorical tradition was to alter the foundation of modern evangelicalism.

Second, I contend that definition, the broader purpose of every debate among evangelicals, was well-suited to conservative, rather than progressive rhetoric. To name something reflects a metaphysical idea that “the highest reality is being, not becoming.”³⁰ Like Richard Weaver, evangelicals understood meaning as something that “cannot be judged as relative simply to time and place; hence, in our dialectical vocabulary there is a theoretical absolute rightness of meaning.”³¹ Thus, evangelicals could apply their knowledge to changing times like any modern subjects, but they could not apparently change the meaning of their purpose as individuals, how their homes should function, or how they should act as citizens. Those identities were fixed and “tradition” served as a safeguard for maintaining ideals of evangelical identity. Perhaps if progressive evangelicals could argue that evangelicalism had made tradition an idol—turning this rhetorical resource on its head—evangelicals would more readily adapt to social change. Jaroslav Pelikan contends that tradition becomes an idol when “it makes the preservation and repetition of the past an end in itself; it claims to have the transcendent reality and truth captive and encapsulated in that past, and it requires an idolatrous submission to the authority of tradition, since truth would not dare to appear outside it.”³² If evangelicals could see tradition as a way to seek truth rather than be truth itself, they would be able to

manage social change from a different perspective—one that afforded them the grace to see debate, not as a way to police boundaries, but as a world-building exercise.

¹ Thomas B. Farrell, “Rhetoric in History as Theory and Praxis: A Blast from the Past,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 41, no. 4 (2008): 324.

² George Marsden, ed. *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), xi.

³ Molly Worthen has written an excellent account of the crisis of authority that is central to evangelical Christianity. Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴ William H. Bentley, *National Black Evangelical Association: Evolution of a Concept of Ministry* (Chicago: The Author, 1979).

⁵ Celeste Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 3.

⁶ David Zarefsky, “Four Senses of Rhetorical History,” in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 32.

⁷ Debra Hawhee and Christa Olson, “Pan-historiography,” in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Michelle Baliff (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2013), 97.

⁸ Jessica Enoch, “Releasing Hold: Feminist Historiography Without the Tradition,” in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. Michelle Baliff (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2013), 68.

⁹ Gary S. Selby, *Martin Luther King and the Rhetoric of Freedom* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 22.

¹⁰ James Jasinski, “Instrumentalism, Contextualism, and Interpretation,” in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics*, eds. Alan G. Groass and William M. Keith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 210.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹² “Public Policy,” The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, accessed April 1, 2016, https://erlc.com/public_policy/

¹³ John Piper, tweet, February 26, 2011. John Piper tweeted, “Farewell Rob Bell,” after Bell published *Love Wins: Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. The book was an apparent embrace of universalism.

¹⁴ Kirkland An, “Professor ‘Flabbergasted’ Over Wheaton’s Plan to Fire her Over Worship Comments,” *The Washington Post*, Jan 6, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/01/05/wheaton-is-planning-to-fire-professor-who-said-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god/>

¹⁵ Stanton L. Jones to Larycia Hawkins, “Areas of Significant Concern,” Dec 15, 2015, <http://drlaryciahawkins.org/category/from-wheaton/>

¹⁶ Aaron Griffith, “Wheaton’s Controversy over Muslims and Christians Ignores the School’s Own History” *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/01/05/wheatons-controversy-over-muslims-and-christians-ignores-the-schools-own-history/>

¹⁷ Matthew Arildsen, “Why Wheaton’s Move to Fire Controversial Professor Makes Sense” *The Washington Post*, January 8, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/01/08/why-wheatons-move-to-fire-controversial-professor-makes-sense/?tid=sm_tw

¹⁸ Manya Brachear Pashman, "Wheaton College Seeks to Fire Christian Professor Over View of Islam," *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 6, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-wheaton-college-professor-fired-20160105-story.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "How Rachel Held Evans Became the Most Polarizing Woman in Evangelicalism," *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/04/16/how-rachel-held-evans-became-the-most-polarizing-woman-in-evangelicalism/>

²¹ Jonathan Merritt, "Rachel Held Evans Defends Exit from Evangelicalism, Calls Christians to Celebrate Sacraments," *Religion News Service*, March 9, 2015, <http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2015/03/09/rachel-held-evans-defends-exit-evangelicalism-calls-christians-celebrate-sacraments/#sthash.VoLxgzL2.dpuf>

²² The Reformation Project, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.reformationproject.org>.

²³ A 2015 LifeWay Research poll found that 50% of Americans agree with the statement, "I believe gay marriage should be legal" while only 30% of evangelicals agree—the same percent that feel homosexuality is not sinful. See "American Views of Gay Marriage Are Divided by Faith and Friendship," LifeWay Research, last modified April 16, 2015, <http://lifewayresearch.com/2015/04/16/american-views-of-gay-marriage/>

²⁴ "A majority (54%) of Silent Generation are theologically conservative, compared to 3-in-10 (29%) Millennials" and "While Millennials comprise about one-third (34%) of the religious progressive coalition, they make up only 16% of the religious conservative coalition. Likewise, the Silent Generation constitutes only 1-in-10 (9%)." Robert P. Jones, et al., "Do Americans Believe Capitalism and Government are Working?: Religious Left, Religious Right, and the Future of the Economic Debate," *Public Religion Research Institute*, July 18, 2013, <http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2013-Economic-Values-Report-Final-.pdf>

²⁵ Caryle Murphy, "Most U.S. Christian Groups Grow More Accepting of Homosexuality," *Pew Research Center*, Dec 18, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/18/most-u-s-christian-groups-grow-more-accepting-of-homosexuality/>

²⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion After September 11* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

²⁷ Richard Weaver, *Language is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 34.

²⁸ Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, "Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate: Moral Clarity Tempered by Pragmatism," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006): 30.

²⁹ Linda M.G. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 79.

³⁰ Weaver, *Language is Sermonic*, 212.

³¹ Ibid., 136.

³² Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 55.

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